THE CHURCH

AND

ITS POLITY.

BY

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PREFACE.

In 1835 my father began to write a series of annual articles, in review of the action of each successive General Assembly, in which he furnished a brief narrative of the proceedings, and discussed the doctrinal and ecclesiastical principles involved. He contributed each of the articles of this series which appeared in the *Princeton Review* from 1835 to 1868, with the exception probably of that of 1841. They, therefore, contain an exposition of his views of the fundamental principles underlying the constitution of the Church and its administration, and of the practical application of these principles to the various historical conditions experienced by the American Presbyterian Church during that long period.

In 1845 he began to lecture to his classes in the Seminary on the topics embraced under the general head of Ecclesiology, and eventually lectured over the whole ground embraced in this department. At that time it was apparently his purpose to prepare for publication an exhaustive treatise on the subject, defending Presbyterian Church order in view of the present attitude of its Prelatic and Independent opponents. His manuscripts disclose the fact that these lectures were more than once rewritten, and articles substantially identical with several of them were published in the *Princeton Review* in successive years from 1846 to 1857. After the publicatoin of his *Systematic Theology*, he often expressed the desire that he might be permitted to complete that work by the addition of a fourth volume embracing the department of Ecclesiology; but he was prevented by the infirmities incident to his advanced age. And it is with reluctance that his representatives now

relinquish the hope of publishing these papers in a connected form, from the conviction that they have no right to publish in his name that which his own judgment regarded as too imperfectly elaborated.

In the meantime, the Rev. William Durant, of Albany, N. Y., an intelligent and enthusiastic pupil of my father, was struck with the vast amount of valuable discussion of Church principles and their practical applications, contained in these articles. He believed that if selections from these discussions were judiciously made and systematically grouped, a work of great value might be offered to the ministry, and to those intelligent laymen who are interested in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. He consequently accomplished this work with the cordial approval of my father. After its completion, at the request of Mr. Durant, I subjected his work to a general review, and have now entire confidence in thus publicly testifying to my conviction that in the selection and arrangement of extracts, the reader of this work will have a fair, and, as far as the circumstances admit, an adequate exposition of my father's views, expressed in his own language, on all the subjects set forth in the table of contents. This table of contents itself discloses the wide range and the thorough analysis embraced in these discussions; and hence the very considerable contribution made in this volume to the elucidation of the subject set forth on its title page.

A. A. HODGE.

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PART I.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

TO THE

ANNUAL ARTICLES ON "THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:"

IN THE "PRINCETON REVIEW," 1835 AND 1837.

DURING the sessions of the late General Assembly of our Church, so many subjects of interest were brought under discussion, that a brief review of the more important of these topics may perhaps be both acceptable and useful. The principles involved in the settlement of these questions are likely to be called up in subsequent Assemblies, and must influence, to a greater or less degree, the action of all inferior judicatories. It is, therefore, a matter of importance to have the grounds on which certain measures were advocated and opposed spread before the ministers and elders of the Church. We propose, therefore, to notice the most important questions debated and determined by the last Assembly, and to present a general view of the arguments on both sides. We are well aware that this is a difficult and delicate task. Our dependence for information must be almost exclusively on the reports of the debates published in the religious journals, which are confessedly very imperfect.

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Were these papers in the hands of all our readers, and did they present the information which we wish to communicate in a form as convenient for preservation and reference as the pages of a Quarterly Review, we might well spare ourselves the labour of this digest. But this not being the case, we feel we shall be rendering an acceptable service in reducing within as small a compass as possible a view of the more important discussions of the supreme judicatory of our Church. There is one other preliminary remark that we wish to make. While

we shall aim at perfect impartiality we do not expect fully to attain it. It is next to impossible, in presenting the arguments for and against any particular measure, not to exhibit those which strike the writer's own mind with the greatest force, with more clearness and effect than those of an opposite character. Our readers therefore must make due allowance on this score, and remember, as an apology for occasional inaccuracy, the comparative scantiness of the sources of information at our command. [*Princeton Review*, 1835, p. 440.]

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It may be proper to repeat what we have said on former occasions, that it is not the object of these accounts of the proceedings of the Assembly, to give the minutes of that body, or to record all the motions and debates, but simply to select the topics of most importance, and to give the best view we can of the arguments on either side. We make no pretensions to indifference or neutrality. The arguments of those from whom we differ we try to give with perfect fairness, as far as possible, in the language of the reports given by their friends. But we do not undertake to argue the case for them. This we could not do honestly or satisfactorily. On the other hand, we endeavour to make the best argument we can in favour of the measures we approve, using all the speeches of the supporters of those measures, and putting down any thing which may happen to occur to ourselves. Our object is to let our readers know what questions were debated, and to give them the best means in our power to form an opinion of the correctness of the conclusions arrived at. [*Princeton Review*, 1837, note p. 407.]

PRELIMINARY PRINCIPLES.

CHAPTER I.

IDEA OF THE CHURCH.[*]

In that symbol of faith adopted by the whole Christian world, commonly called the Apostles' Creed, the Church is declared to be "the Communion of saints." In analyzing the idea of the Church here presented, it may be proper to state, first, what is not included in it; and secondly, what it does really embrace.

It is obvious that the Church, considered as the communion of saints, does not necessarily include the idea of a visible society organized under one definite form. A kingdom is a political society governed by a king; an aristocracy is such a society governed by a privileged class; a democracy is a political organization having the power centred in the people. The very terms suggest these ideas. There can be no kingdom without a king, and no aristocracy without a privileged class. There may, however, be a communion of saints without a visible head, without prelates, without a democratic covenant. In other words, the Church, as defined in the creed, is not a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. It may be either, all, or neither. It is not, however, presented as a visible organization, to which the form is essential, as in the case of the human societies just mentioned.

Again, the conception of the Church as the communion of saints, does not include the idea of any external organization. The bond of union may be spiritual. There may be communion without external organized union. The Church, therefore, according to this view, is not essentially a visible society; it is not a corporation which ceases to exist if the external bond of union be dissolved. It may be proper that such union should exist; it may be true that it has always existed; but it is not necessary. The Church, as such, is not a visible society. All

[* "Princeton Review," same title, 1853, p. 249.]

visible union, all external organization, may cease, and yet, so long as there are saints who have communion, the Church exists, if the Church is the communion of saints. That communion may be in faith, in love, in obedience to a common Lord. It may have its origin in something deeper still; in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of Christ, by which every member is united to Christ, and all the members are joined in one body. This is a union far more real, a communion far more intimate, than subsists between the members of any visible society as such. So far, therefore, is the Apostles' Creed from representing the Church as a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy; so far is it from setting forth the Church as a visible society of one specific form, that it does not present it under the idea of an external society at all. The saints may exist, they may have communion, the Church may continue under any external organization, or without any visible organization whatever.

What is affirmed in the above cited definition is, first, that the Church consists of saints; and, secondly, of saints in communion—that is, so united as to form one body. To determine, therefore, the true idea of the Church, it is only necessary to ascertain who are meant by the "saints," and the nature of their communion, or the essential bond by which they are united.

The word ἅγιος, *saint*, signifies holy, worthy of reverence, pure in the sense of freedom either from guilt, or from moral pollution. The word ἁγιαζειν means to render holy, or sacred; to cleanse from guilt, as by a sacrifice; or from moral defilement, by the renewing of the heart. The saints, therefore, according to the scriptural meaning of the term, are those who have been cleansed from guilt or justified, who have been inwardly renewed or sanctified, and who have been separated from the world and consecrated to God. Of such the Church consists. If a man is not justified, sanctified, and consecrated to God, he is not a saint, and therefore does not belong to the Church, which is the communion of saints.

Under the old dispensation, the whole nation of the Hebrews was called holy, as separated from the idolatrous nations around them, and consecrated to God. The Israelites were also called the children of God, as the recipients of his peculiar favours. These expressions had reference rather to external relations and privileges than to internal character. In the New Testament, however, they are applied only to the true people of God. None are there called saints but the sanctified in Christ Jesus. None are called the children of God, but those born of the Spirit, who being children are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ of a heavenly inheritance. When, therefore, it is said that the Church consists of saints, the meaning is not that it con-

sists of all who are externally consecrated to God, irrespective of their moral character, but that it consists of true Christians or sincere believers.

As to the bond by which the saints are united so as to become a Church, it cannot be anything external, because that may and always does unite those who are not saints. The bond, whatever it is, must be peculiar to the saints; it must be something to which their justification, sanctification, and access to God are due. This can be nothing less than their relation to Christ. It is in virtue of union with him that men become saints, or are justified, sanctified, and brought nigh to God. They are one body in Christ Jesus. The bond of union between Christ and his people is the Holy Spirit, who dwells in him and in them. He is the head, they are the members of his body, the Church, which is one body, because pervaded and animated by one Spirit. The proximate and essential bond of union between the saints, that which gives rise to their communion, and makes them the Church or body of Christ, is, therefore, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Such, then, is the true idea of the Church, or, what is the same thing, the idea of the true Church. It is the communion of saints, the body of those who are united to Christ by the indwelling of his Spirit. The two essential points included in this definition are, that the Church consists of saints, and that the bond of their union is not external organization, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. These, therefore, are the two points to be established. As, however, the one involves the other, they need not be considered separately. The same arguments which prove the one, prove also the other.

By this statement, it is not meant that the word *church* is not properly used in various senses. The object of inquiry is not the usage of a word, but the true idea of a thing; not how the word church is employed, but what the Church itself is. Who compose the Church? What is essential to the existence of that body, to which the attributes, the promises, the prerogatives of the Church belong? On the decision of that question rests the solution of all other questions in controversy between Romanists and Protestants.

The mode of verifying the true idea of the Church.—The holy Scriptures are on this, as on all other matters of faith or practice, our only infallible rule. We may confirm our interpretation of the Scriptures from various sources, especially from the current judgment of the Church, but the real foundation of our faith is to be sought in the word of God itself. The teachings of the Scriptures concerning the nature of the Church, are both direct and indirect. They didactically assert what the Church is, and they teach such things respecting it, as necessarily lead to a certain conception of its nature.

We may learn from the Bible the true idea of the Church, in the first place, from the use of the word itself. Under all the various applications of the term, that which is essential to the idea will be found to be expressed. In the second place, the equivalent or descriptive terms employed to express the same idea, reveal its nature. In the third place, the attributes ascribed to the Church in the word of God, determine its nature. If those attributes can be affirmed only of a visible society, then the Church must, as to its essence, be such a society. If, on the other hand, they belong only to the communion of saints, then none but saints constitute the Church. These attributes must all be included in the idea of the Church. They are but different phases or manifestations of its nature. They can all, therefore, be traced back to it, or evolved from it. If the Church is the body of those who are united to Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then the indwelling of the Spirit must make the Church holy, visible, perpetual, one, catholic. All these attributes must be referable to that one thing to which the Church owes its nature. In the fourth place, the promises and prerogatives which belong to the Church, teach us very plainly whether it is an external society, or a communion of saints. In the fifth place, there is a necessary connection between a certain scheme of doctrine and a certain theory of the Church. It is admitted that the Church includes all who are in Christ, all who are saints. It is also admitted that all who are in Christ are in the Church. The question, therefore, Who are in the Church? must depend upon the answer to the question, Who are in Christ? or how do we become united to him?

Finally, as the true doctrine concerning the way of salvation leads to the true theory of the Church, we may expect to see that theory asserted and taught in all ages. However corrupted and overlaid it may be, as other doctrines have been, it will be found still preserved and capable of being recognized under all these perversions. The testimony of the Church itself will, therefore, be found to be in favour of the true doctrine as to what the Church is.

The full exposition of these topics would require a treatise by itself. The evidence in favour of the true doctrine concerning the Church, even in the imperfect manner in which it is unfolded in this article, is to be sought through all the following pages, and not exclusively under one particular head. All that is now intended is to present a general view of the principal arguments in support of the doctrine, that the Church consists of saints or true Christians, and that the essential bond of their union is not external organization, but the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Argument from the scriptural use of the word Church.—The word

ἐκκλησια from ἐκκαλεω, *evocare*, means an assembly or body of men evoked, or called out and together. It was used to designate the public assembly of the people, among the Greeks, collected for the transaction of business. It is applied to the tumultuous assembly called together in Ephesus, by the outcries of Demetrius, Acts xix. 39. It is used for those who are called out of the world, by the gospel, so as to form a distinct class. It was not the Helotes at Athens who heard the proclamation of the heralds, but the people who actually assembled, who constituted the ἐκκλησια of that city. In like manner it is not those who merely hear the call of the gospel, who constitute the Church, but those who obey the call. Thousands of the Jews and Gentiles, in the age of the apostles, heard the gospel, received its invitations, but remained Jews and idolaters. Those only who obeyed the invitation, and separated themselves from their former connections, and entered into a new relation and communion, made up the Church of that day. In all the various applications, therefore, of the word ἐκκλησια in the New Testament, we find it uniformly used as a collective term for the κλητοι or ἐκλεκτοι, that is, for those who obey the gospel call, and who are thus selected and separated, as a distinct class from the rest of the world. Sometimes the term includes all who have already, or who shall hereafter accept the call of God. This is the sense of the word in Eph. iii. 10, where it is said to be the purpose of God to manifest unto principalities and powers, by the Church, his manifold wisdom; and in Eph. v. 25, 26, where it is said, that Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Sometimes the word is used for the people of God indefinitely, as when it is said of Paul, he persecuted the Church; or when we are commanded to give no offence to the Church. The word is very commonly used in this sense, as when we speak of the progress of the Church, or pray for the Church. It is not any specific, organized body, that is commonly intended in such expressions, but the kingdom of Christ indefinitely. Sometimes it is used for any number of the called, collectively considered, united together by some common bond. Thus we hear of the Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, the Church in the house of Nymphas, the Church in the house of Philemon; the Church of Jerusalem, of Antioch, of Corinth, &c. In all these cases, the meaning of the word is the same. It is always used as a collective term for the κλητοι, either for the whole number, or for any portion of them considered as a whole. The Church of God is the whole number of the elect; the Church of Corinth is the whole number of the called in that city. An organized body may be a Church, and their organi-

zation may be the reason for their being considered as a whole or as a unit. But it is not their organization that makes them a Church. The multitude of believers in Corinth, organized or dispersed, is the Church of Corinth, just as the whole multitude of saints in heaven and on earth is the Church of God. It is not organization, but evocation, the actual calling out and separating from others, that makes the Church.

The nature of the Church, therefore, must depend on the nature of the gospel call. If that call is merely or essentially to the outward profession of certain doctrines, or to baptism, or to anything external, then the Church must consist of all who make that profession, or are baptized. But if the call of the gospel is to repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, then none obey that call but those who repent and believe, and the Church must consist of penitent believers. It cannot require proof that the call of the gospel is to faith and repentance. The great apostle tells us he received his apostleship to the obedience of faith, among all nations, *i. e.*, to bring them to that obedience which consists in faith. He calls those who heard him to witness that he had not failed to testify both to the Jews and also to the Gentiles, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. No one was admitted by the apostles to the Church, or recognized as of the number of "the called," who did not profess faith and repentance, and such has been the law and practice of the Church ever since. There can, therefore, be no doubt on this subject. What the apostles did, and what all ministers, since their day, have been commissioned to do, is to preach the gospel; to offer men salvation on the condition of faith and repentance. Those who obeyed that call were baptized, and recognized as constituent members of the Church; those who rejected it, who refused to repent and believe, were not members, they were not in fact "called," and by that divine vocation separated from the world. It would, therefore, be as unreasonable to call the inhabitants of a country an army, because they heard the call to arms, as to call all who hear but do not obey the gospel, the Church. The army consists of those who actually enrol themselves as soldiers; and the Church consists of those who actually repent and believe, in obedience to the call of the gospel.

This conclusion, to which we are led by the very nature of the call by which the Church is constituted, is confirmed by the unvarying usage of the New Testament. Every ἐκκλησια is composed of the κλητοι, of those called out and assembled. But the word κλητοι, as applied to Christians, is never used in the New Testament, except in reference to true believers. If, therefore, the Church consists of "the called," it must consist of true believers. That such is the usage of the word

"called" in the New Testament, is abundantly evident. In Rom. i. 6, believers are designated the κλητοι Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ, *Christ's called ones.* In Rom. viii. 28, all things are said to work together for good, τοις κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοις, *to the called according to purpose.* In 1 Cor. i. 2, 24, we find the same use of the word. The gospel is said to be foolishness to the Greeks, and a stumbling-block to the Jews, but to "the called," it is declared to be the wisdom of God and power of God. The called are distinguished as those to whom the gospel is effectual. Jude addresses believers as the sanctified by the Father, the preserved in Christ Jesus, and "called." In Rev. xvii. 14, the triumphant followers of the Lamb are called κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί. The doctrinal usage of the word κλητοί is, therefore, not a matter of doubt. None but those who truly repent and believe, are ever called κλητοί, and, as the ἐκκλησια consists of the κλητοί, the Church must consist of true believers. This conclusion is confirmed by a reference to analogous terms applied to believers. As they are κλητοί, because the subjects of a divine κλῆσις, or vocation, so they are ἐκλεκτοί, Rom. viii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 2; ἡγιασμενοι, 1 Cor. i. 1; Jude 1; Heb. x. 10; προορισθέντες, Eph. i. 11; σωζόμενοι, 1 Cor. i. 18; 2 Cor. ii. 15; 2 Thess. ii. 11; τεταγμένοι εις ζωὴν αἰωνιον, Acts xiii. 48. All these terms have reference to that divine agency, to that call, choice, separation, or appointment, by which men are made true believers, and they are never applied to any other class.

The use of the cognate words, καλέω and κλῆσις, goes to confirm the conclusion as to the meaning of the word κλητοί. When used in reference to the act of God, in calling men by the gospel, they always designate a call that is effectual, so that the subjects of that vocation become the true children of God. Thus, in Rom. viii. 30, whom he calls, them he also justifies, whom he justifies, them he also glorifies. All the called, therefore, (the κλητοί, the ἐκκλησία,) are justified and glorified. In Rom. ix. 24, the vessels of mercy are said to be those whom God calls. In 1 Cor. i. 9, believers are said to be called into fellowship of the Son of God. In the same chapter the apostle says: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are *called*," *i. e.* converted and made the true children of God. In 1 Cor. vii. the word is used nine times in the same way. In Gal. i. 15, Paul says, speaking of God, "who has called me by his grace." See, also, Gal. v. 8, 13; Eph. iv. 4; Col. iii. 15; 1 Thess. ii. 12; v. 24; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. i. 9. It is said believers are called, not according to their works, but according to the purpose and grace of God, given them in Christ Jesus, before the world began. In Heb. ix. 5, Christ is said to have died that the called, οἱ κεκλημένοι, might receive the eternal inheritance. In 1 Pet.

ii. 9, believers are described as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, whom God hath called out of darkness into his marvellous light. In the salutation prefixed to his second Epistle, this apostle wishes all good to those whom God had called by his glorious power.

In proof that the word κλῆσις is constantly used in reference to the effectual call of God, see Rom. xi. 29; 1 Cor. i. 26; Eph. i. 18, iv. 1; Phil. iii. 14; Heb. iii. 1; 2 Pet. i. 10.

From these considerations it is clear that the κλητοὶ or *called*, are the effectually called, those who really obey the gospel, and by repentance and faith are separated from the world. And as it is admitted that the ἐκκλησία is a collective term for the κλητοί, it follows that none but true believers constitute the Church, or that the Church is the communion of saints. The word in the New Testament is never used except in reference to the company of true believers. This consideration alone is sufficient to determine the nature of the Church.

To this argument it is indeed objected, that as the apostles addressed all the Christians of Antioch, Corinth, or Ephesus, as constituting the Church in those cities, and as among them there were many hypocrites, therefore the word Church designates a body of professors, whether sincere or insincere. The fact is admitted, that all the professors of the true religion in Corinth, without reference to their character, are called the church of Corinth. This, however, is no answer to the preceding argument. It determines nothing as to the nature of the Church. It does not prove it to be an external society, composed of sincere and insincere professors of the true religion. All the professors in Corinth are called saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, the saved, the children of God, the faithful believers, &c., &c. Does this prove that there are good and bad saints, holy and unholy sanctified persons, believing and unbelieving believers, or men who are at the same time children of God and children of the devil? Their being called believers does not prove that they were all believers; neither does their being called the Church prove that they were all members of the Church. They are designated according to their profession. In professing to be members of the Church, they professed to be believers, to be saints and faithful brethren, and this proves that the Church consists of true believers. This will appear more clearly from the following.

Argument from the terms used as equivalents for the word Church.

Those epistles in the New Testament which are addressed to Churches, are addressed to believers, saints, the children of God. These latter terms, therefore, are equivalent to the former. The conclusion to be drawn from this fact is, that the Church consists of believers.

In the same sense and in no other, in which infidels may be called believers, and wicked men saints, in the same sense may they be said to be included in the Church. If they are not really believers, they are not the Church. They are not constituent members of the company of believers.

The force of this argument will appear from a reference to the salutations prefixed to these epistles. The epistle to the Romans, for example, is addressed to "the called of Jesus Christ," "the beloved of God," "called to be saints." The epistles to the Corinthians are addressed "to the Church of God which is at Corinth." Who are they? "The sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," the worshippers of Christ. The Ephesian Church is addressed as "the saints who are in Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus." The Philippians are called "saints and faithful brethren in Christ." Peter addressed his first Epistle to "the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" *i. e.*, to those who, being elected to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, are sanctified by the Spirit. His second Epistle is directed to those who had obtained like precious faith with the apostle himself, through (or in) the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

From this collation it appears, that to call any body of men a Church, is to call them saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, elected to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ, partakers of the same precious faith with the apostles, the beloved of God, and faithful brethren. The inference from this fact is inevitable. The Church consists of those to whom these terms are applicable.

The only way by which this argument can be evaded is, by saying that the faith here spoken of is mere speculative faith, the sanctification intended is mere external consecration; the sonship referred to, is merely adoption to external privileges, or a church state. This objection, however, is completely obviated by the contents of these epistles. The persons to whom these terms are applied, and who are represented as constituting the Church, are described as really holy in heart and life; not mere professors of the true faith, but true believers; not merely the recipients of certain privileges, but the children of God and heirs of eternal life.

The members of the Church in Corinth are declared to be in fellowship with Jesus Christ, chosen of God, inhabited by his Spirit, washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. That the faith which Paul attributes to the members of the Church in Rome, and the sonship of which he represents them as partakers, were not speculative or external, is evi-

dent, because he says, those who believe have peace with God, rejoice in hope of his glory and have his love shed abroad in their hearts. Those who are in Christ, he says, are not only free from condemnation, but walk after the Spirit, and are spiritually-minded. Being the sons of God they are led by the Spirit, they have the spirit of adoption, and are joint heirs with Jesus Christ of a heavenly inheritance. The members of the Church in Ephesus were faithful brethren in Christ Jesus, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, quickened and raised from spiritual death, and made to sit in heavenly places. All those in Colosse who are designated as the Church, are described as reconciled unto God, the recipients of Christ, who were complete in him, all whose sins are pardoned. The Church in Thessalonica consisted of those whose work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, Paul joyfully remembered, and of whose election of God he was well assured. They were children of the light and of the day, whom God had appointed to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. The churches to whom Peter wrote consisted of those who had been begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Though they had not seen the Saviour, they loved him, and believing on him, rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. They had purified their souls unto unfeigned love of the brethren, having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God. Those whom John recognized as members of the Church he says had received an anointing of the Holy one, which abode with them, teaching them the truth. They were the sons of God, who had overcome the world, who believing in Christ had eternal life.

From all this, it is evident that the terms, believers, saints, children of God, the sanctified, the justified, and the like, are equivalent to the collective term Church, so that any company of men addressed as a Church, are always addressed as saints, faithful brethren, partakers of the Holy Ghost, and children of God. The Church, therefore, consists exclusively of such. That these terms do not express merely a professed faith or external consecration is evident, because those to whom they are applied are declared to be no longer unjust, extortioners, thieves, drunkards, covetous, revilers, or adulterers, but to be led by the Spirit to the belief and obedience of the truth. The Church, therefore, consists of believers; and if it consists of believers, it consists of those who have peace with God, and have overcome the world.

It is not to be inferred from the fact that all the members of the Christian societies in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus, are addressed as believers, that they all had true faith. But we can infer, that since what is said of them is said of them as believers, it had no application to those who were without faith. In like manner, though all are

addressed as belonging to the Church, what is said of the Church had no application to those who were not really its members. Addressing a body of professed believers, as believers, does not prove them to be all sincere; neither does addressing a body of men as a Church, prove that they all belong to the Church. In both cases they are addressed according to their profession. If it is a fatal error to transfer what is said in Scripture of believers, to mere professors, to apply to nominal what is said of true Christians, it is no less fatal to apply what is said of the Church to those who are only by profession its members. It is no more proper to infer that the Church consists of the promiscuous multitude of sincere and insincere professors of the true faith, from the fact that all the professors, good and bad, in Corinth, are called the Church, than it would be to infer that they were all saints and children of God, because they are all so denominated. It is enough to determine the true nature of the Church, that none are ever addressed as its members, who are not, at the same time, addressed as true saints and sincere believers.

Argument from the descriptions of the Church.—The descriptions of the Church given in the word of God, apply to none but true believers, and therefore true believers constitute the Church. These descriptions relate either to the relation which the Church sustains to Christ, or to the character of its members, or to its future destiny. The argument is, that none but true believers bear that relation to Christ, which the Church is said to sustain to him; none but believers possess the character ascribed to members of the Church; and none but believers are heirs of those blessings which are in reserve for the Church. If all this is so, it follows that the Church consists of those who truly believe. It will not be necessary to keep these points distinct, because in many passages of Scripture, the relation which the Church bears to Christ, the character of its members, and its destiny, are all brought into view.

1. The Church is described as the body of Christ. Eph. i. 22; iv. 15, 16; Col. i. 18. The relation expressed by this designation, includes subjection, dependence, participation of the same life, sympathy, and community. Those who are the body of Christ, are dependent upon him and subject to him, as the human body to its head. They are partakers of his life. The human body is animated by one soul, and has one vital principle. This is the precise truth which the Scriptures teach in reference to the Church as the body of Christ. It is his body, because animated by his Spirit, so that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9; for it is by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13. The distinguishing characteristic of the members of Christ's body, is the indwell-

ing of the Holy Ghost. They are therefore called πνευματικοι, men having the Spirit. They are led by the Spirit. They are spiritually-minded. All this is true of sincere believers alone. It is not true of the promiscuous body of professors, nor of the members of any visible society, as such, and therefore no such visible society is the body of Christ. What is said of the body of Christ, is not true of any external organized corporation on earth, and, therefore, the two cannot be identical.

Again, as the body sympathizes with the head, and the members sympathize one with another, so all the members of Christ's body sympathize with him, and with each other. This sympathy is not merely a duty, it is a fact. Where it does not exist, there membership in Christ's body does not exist. All, therefore, who are members of Christ's body feel his glory to be their own, his triumph to be their victory. They love those whom he loves, and they hate what he hates. Finally, as the human head and body have a common destiny, so have Christ and his Church. As it partakes of his life, it shall participate in his glory. The members of his body suffer with him here, and shall reign with him hereafter.

It is to degrade and destroy the gospel to apply this description of the Church as the body of Christ, to the mass of nominal Christians, the visible Church, which consists of "all sorts of men." No such visible society is animated by his Spirit, is a partaker of his life, and heir of his glory. It is to obliterate the distinction between holiness and sin, between the Church and the world, between the children of God and the children of the devil, to apply what the Bible says of the body of Christ to any promiscuous society of saints and sinners.

2. The Church is declared to be the temple of God, because he dwells in it by his Spirit. That temple is composed of living stones. 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. Know ye not, says the apostle to the Corinthians, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you? 1 Cor. vi. 19. The inference from this description of the Church is, that it is composed of those in whom the Spirit of God dwells; but the Spirit of God dwells only in true believers, and therefore the Church consists of such believers.

3. The Church is the family of God. Those, therefore, who are not the children of God are not members of his Church. The wicked are declared to be the children of the devil; they therefore cannot be the children of God. Those only are his children who have the spirit of adoption; and being children, are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Rom. viii. 16, 17.

4. The Church is the flock of Christ; its members are his sheep. He knows them, leads them, feeds them, and lays down his life for

them. They were given to him by the Father, and no one is able to pluck them out of his hand. They know his voice and follow him, but a stranger they will not follow. John, x. This description of the Church as the flock of Christ, is applicable only to saints or true believers, and therefore they alone constitute his Church.

5. The Church is the bride of Christ; the object of his peculiar love, for which he gave himself, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. No man, saith the Scripture, ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. Eph. v. 25–30. It is not true, according to the Bible, that any but true Christians are the objects of this peculiar love of Christ, and therefore they alone constitute that Church which is his bride.

According to the Scriptures, then, the Church consists of those who are in Christ, to whom he is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; of those who are his body, in whom he dwells by his Spirit; of those who are the family of God, the children of his grace; of those who, as living stones, compose that temple in which God dwells, and who rest on that elect, tried, precious corner-stone, which God has laid in Zion; of those who are the bride of Christ, purchased by his blood, sanctified by his word, sacraments, and Spirit, to be presented at last before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. These descriptions of the Church are inapplicable to any external visible society as such; to the Church of Rome, the Church of England, or the Presbyterian Church. The only Church of which these things are true, is the communion of saints, the body of true Christians.

Arguments from the attributes of the Church.—The great question at issue on this whole subject is, whether we are to conceive of the Church, in its essential character, as an external society, or as the communion of saints. One method of deciding this question, is by a reference to the acknowledged attributes of the Church. If those attributes belong only to a visible society, then the Church must be such a society. But if they can be predicated only of the communion of saints, then the Church is a spiritual body, and not an external, visible society.

The Church is the body of Christ, in which he dwells by his Spirit. It is in virtue of this indwelling of the Spirit, that the Church is what she is, and all that she is. To this source her holiness, unity, and perpetuity, are to be referred, and under these attributes all others are comprehended.

First, then, as to holiness. The Church considered as the communion of saints, is holy. Where the Spirit of God is, there is holi-

ness. If, therefore, the Spirit dwells in the Church, the Church must be holy, not merely nominally, but really; not merely because her founder, her doctrines, her institutions are holy, but because her members are personally holy. They are, and must be, holy brethren, saints, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, beloved of God. They are led by the Spirit, and mind the things of the Spirit. The indwelling of the Spirit produces this personal holiness, and that separation from the world and consecration to God, which make the Church a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The Church is defined to be a company of believers, the *cœtus fidelium*. To say that the Church is holy, is to say that that company of men and women who compose the Church, is holy. It is a contradiction to say that "all sorts of men," thieves, murderers, drunkards, the unjust, the rapacious, and the covetous, enter into the composition of a society whose essential attribute is holiness. To say that a man is unjust, is to say that he is not holy, and to say that he is not holy, is to say that he is not one of a company of saints. If then we conceive of the Church as the communion of saints, as the body of Christ, in which the Holy Spirit dwells as the source of its life, we see that the Church is and must be holy. It must be inwardly pure, that is, its members must be regenerated men, and it must be really separated from the world, and consecrated to God. These are the two ideas included in the scriptural sense of holiness, and in both these senses the Church is truly holy. But in neither sense can holiness be predicated of any external visible society as such. No such society is really pure, nor is it really separated from the world, and devoted to God. This is evident from the most superficial observation. It is plain that neither the Roman, the Greek, the English, nor the Presbyterian Church, falls within the definition of the Church as the *cœtus sanctorum*, or company of believers. No one of these societies is holy, they are all more or less corrupt and worldly. The church state does not in the least depend on the moral character of their members, if the Church is essentially an external society. Such a society may sink to the lowest degree of corruption, and yet be a church, provided it retain its external integrity. Of no such a society, however, is holiness an attribute, and all history and daily observation concur in their testimony as to this fact. If, therefore, no community of which holiness is not an attribute can be the Church, it follows, that no external society, composed of "all sorts of men," can be the holy, catholic Church. Those, therefore, who regard the Church as an external society, are forced to deny that the Church is holy. They all assert that it is composed of hypocrites and unrenewed men, as well as of saints. Thus, for example, Bellarmine defines the Church to be "the society of men united by the profession of the same Christian faith, and

the communion of the same sacraments, under the government of legitimate pastors, and especially of the only vicar of Christ here on earth, the Roman Pontiff." * By the first clause of this definition he excludes all who do not profess the true faith, such as Jews, Mohammedans, Pagans, and heretics; by the second, all the unbaptized and the excommunicated; by the third, all schismatics, *i. e.*, all who do not submit to legitimate pastors, (prelates,) especially to the Pope. All other classes of men, he adds, are included in the Church, *etiamsi reprobi, scelesti et impii sint.* The main point of difference between the Romish and Protestant theories of the Church, he says, is that the latter requires internal virtues in order to Church membership, but the former requires nothing beyond outward profession, for the Church, he adds, is just as much an external society as the Roman people, the kingdom of France, or the republic of Venice. †

The Oxford theory of the Church differs from the Romish only in excluding subjection to the Pope as one of its essential characteristics. The Church is defined to be "The whole society of Christians throughout the world, including all those who profess their belief in Christ, and who are subject to lawful pastors." ‡ By Christians, in this definition, are meant nominal, or professed Christians. According to this view, neither inward regeneration, nor "visible sanctity of life, is requisite for admission to the Church of Christ." "The Scriptures and the universal Church appoint," it is said, "only one mode in which Christians are to be made members of the Church. It is baptism, which renders us, by divine right, members of the Church, and entitles us to all the privileges of the faithful." § Again, when speaking of baptism, which thus secures a divine right to all the privileges of the faithful, it is said, there is no "mention of regeneration, sanctity, real piety, visible or invisible, as prerequisite to its reception." ‖ Holiness, therefore, is denied to be an attribute of the Church in any proper sense of the term. This denial is the unavoidable consequence of regarding the Church as a visible society, analogous to an earthly kingdom. As holiness is not necessary to citizenship in the kingdom of Spain, or

* Lib. III, c. ii. col. 108. *Cœtum hominum ejusdem Christianæ fidei professione, et eorundem sacramentorum communione colligatum, sub regimine legitimorum pastorum, ac præcipue unius Christi in terris vicarii Romani Pontificis.*

† *Nos autem . . . non putamus requiri ullam internam virtutem, sed tantum professionem fidei et sacramentorum communionem, quæ sensu ipso percipitur. Ecclesia, enim est cœtus hominum ita visibilis et palpabilis, ut est cœtus populi Romani, vel regnum Galliæ, aut respublica Venetorum.*—Ibid. col. 109.

‡ Palmer on the Church, Amer. edition, vol. i. p. 28.

§ Palmer. Vol. i. page 144. ‖ Palmer. Vol. i. p. 377.

republic of Venice, holiness is not an attribute of either of those communities. Neither Spain nor Venice is, as such, holy. And if the Church, in its true essential character, be a visible society, of which men become members by mere profession, and without holiness, then holiness is not an attribute of the Church. But, as by common consent the Church is holy, a theory of its nature which excludes this attribute, must be both unscriptural and uncatholic, and therefore false.

No false theory can be consistent. If, therefore, the theory of the Church which represents it as an external society of professors is false, we may expect to see its advocates falling continually into suicidal contradictions. The whole Romish or ritual system is founded on the assumption, that the attributes and prerogatives ascribed in Scripture to the Church, belong to the visible Church, irrespective of the character of its members. Nothing is required for admission into that society, but profession of its faith, reception of its sacraments, and submission to its legitimate rulers. If a whole nation of Pagans or Mohammedans should submit to these external conditions, they would be true members of the Church, though ignorant of its doctrines, though destitute of faith, and sunk in moral corruption. To this society the attributes of holiness, unity and perpetuity, belong; this society, thus constituted of "all sorts of men," has the prerogative authoritatively to teach, and to bind and loose; and the teaching and discipline of this society, Christ has promised to ratify in heaven. The absurdities and enormities, however, which flow from this theory, are so glaring and atrocious, that few of its advocates have the nerve to look them in the face. As we have seen, it is a contradiction to call a society composed of "all sorts of men," holy. Those who teach, therefore, that the Church is such a society, sometimes say that holiness is not a condition of membership; in other words, is not an attribute of the Church; and sometimes, that none but the holy are really in the Church, that the wicked are not its true members. But, if this be so, as holiness has its seat in the heart, no man can tell certainly who are holy, and therefore no one can tell who are the real members of the Church, or who actually constitute the body of Christ, which we are required to join and to obey. The Church, therefore, if it consists only of the holy, is not an external society, and the whole ritual system falls to the ground.

Neither Romish nor Anglican writers can escape from these contradictions. Augustin says, the Church is a living body, in which there are both a soul and body. Some are members of the Church in both respects, being united to Christ, as well externally as internally. These are the living members of the Church; others are of the soul, but not of the body—that is, they have faith and love, without external communion with the Church. Others, again, are of the body and not

of the soul—that is, they have no true faith. These last, he says, are as the hairs, or nails, or evil humours of the human body.* According to Augustin, then, the wicked are not true members of the Church; their relation to it is altogether external. They no more make up the Church, than the scurf or hair on the surface of the skin make up the human body. This representation is in entire accordance with the Protestant doctrine, that the Church is a communion of saints, and that none but the holy are its true members. It expressly contradicts the Romish and Oxford theory, that the Church consists of all sorts of men; and that the baptized, no matter what their character, if they submit to their legitimate pastors, are by divine right constituent portions of the Church; and that none who do not receive the sacraments, and who are not thus subject, can be members of the body of Christ. Yet this doctrine of Augustin, so inconsistent with their own, is conceded by Romish writers. They speak of the relation of the wicked to the Church as merely external or nominal, as a dead branch to a tree, or as chaff to the wheat. So, also, does Mr. Palmer,† who says: "It is generally allowed that the wicked belong only externally to the Church." Again: "That the ungodly, whether secret or manifest, do not really belong to the Church, considered as to its invisible character—namely, as consisting of its essential and permanent members, the elect, predestinated, and sanctified, who are known to God only, I admit." ‡ That is, he admits his whole theory to be untenable. He admits, after all, that the wicked "do not really belong to the Church," and therefore, that the real or true Church consists of the sanctified in Christ Jesus. What is said of the wheat is surely not true of the chaff; and what the Bible says of the Church is not true of the wicked. Yet all Romanism, all ritualism, rests on the assumption, that what is said of the wheat is true of the chaff—that what is said of the communion of saints, is true of a body composed of all sorts of men. The argument, then, here is, that, as holiness is an attribute of the Church, no body which is not holy can be the Church. No external visible society, as such, is holy; and, therefore, the Church, of which the Scriptures speak, is not a visible society, but the communion of saints.

The same argument may be drawn from the other attributes of the Church. It is conceded that unity is one of its essential attributes. The Church is one, as there is, and can be but one body of Christ. The Church as the communion of saints is one; as an external society it is not one; therefore, the Church is the company of believers, and not an external society.

* *In Breviculo Collationis. Collat. iii.*

† On the Church. Vol. i. p. 28. ‡ Ibid. p. 143.

The unity of the Church is threefold. 1. Spiritual; the unity of faith and of communion. 2. Comprehensive; the Church is one as it is catholic, embracing all the people of God. 3. Historical; it is the same Church in all ages. In all these senses, the Church considered as the communion of saints, is one; in no one of these senses can unity be predicated of the Church as visible.

The Church, considered as the communion of saints, is one in faith. The Spirit of God leads his people into all truth. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto them. They are all taught of God. The anointing which they have received abideth with them, and teacheth them all things, and is truth. 1 John ii. 27. Under this teaching of the Spirit, which is promised to all believers, and which is with and by the word, they are all led to the knowledge and belief of all necessary truth. And within the limits of such necessary truths, all true Christians, the whole *cœtus sanctorum*, or body of believers, are one. In all ages and in all nations, wherever there are true Christians, you find they have, as to all essential matters, one and the same faith.

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of love as well as of truth, and therefore all those in whom he dwells are one in affection as well as in faith. They have the same inward experience, the same conviction of sin, the same repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the same love of holiness, and desire after conformity to the image of God. There is, therefore, an inward fellowship or congeniality between them, which proves them to be one spirit. They all stand in the same relation to God and Christ; they constitute one family, of which God is the Father; one kingdom, of which Christ is the Lord. They have a common interest and common expectation. The triumph of the Redeemer's kingdom is the common joy and triumph of all his people. They have, therefore, the fellowship which belongs to the subjects of the same king, to the children of the same family, and to the members of the same body. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoices, all the members rejoice with it. This sympathy is an essential characteristic of the body of Christ. Those who do not possess this affection and fellow-feeling for his members, are none of his. This inward spiritual communion expresses itself outwardly, not only in acts of kindness, but especially and appropriately in all acts of Christian fellowship. True believers are disposed to recognize each other as such, to unite as Christians in the service of their common Lord, and to make one joint profession before the world of their allegiance to him. In this, the highest and truest sense, the Church is one. It is one body in Christ Jesus. He dwells by his Spirit in all his members, and thus unites them in one living whole,

leading all to the belief of the same truths, and binding all in the bond of peace. This is the unity of which the apostle speaks: "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Such is the unity which belongs to the Church; it does not belong to any external society, and therefore no such society can be the Church to which the attributes and prerogatives of the body of Christ belong.

In proof that spiritual unity cannot be predicated of the external Church, it is sufficient to refer to the obvious fact, that the Holy Spirit, the ground and bond of that unity, does not dwell in all the members of that Church. Wherever he dwells there are the fruits of holiness, and as those fruits are not found in all who profess to be Christians, the Spirit does not dwell in them so as to unite them to the body of Christ. The consequence is, they have neither the unity of faith nor of communion.

As to the unity of faith, it is undeniable that all Christian societies do not even profess the same faith. While all unite in certain doctrines, they each profess or deny what the others regard as fatal error or necessary truth. The Greek, Latin, and Protestant Churches do not regard themselves as one in faith. Each declares the others to be heretical. But this is not all. Unity of faith does not exist within the pale of these several churches. In each of them all grades and kinds of doctrine, from atheism to orthodoxy, are entertained. No one doubts this. It would be preposterous to assert that all the members of the Latin Church hold the public faith of that society. The great body of them do not know what that faith is, and multitudes among them are infidels. Neither can any one pretend that the standards of the English, Dutch, or Prussian Church, express the faith of all their members. It is a notorious and admitted fact, that every form of religious faith and infidelity is to be found among the members of those societies. Unity of faith, therefore, is one of the attributes of the true Church, which, with no show of truth or reason, can be predicated of any external society calling itself the Church of God.

The case is no less plain with regard to communion. The societies constituting the visible Church, do not maintain Christian communion. They do not all recognize each other as brethren, nor do they unite in the offices of Christian worship and fellowship. On the contrary, they, in many cases, mutually excommunicate each other. The Greek, Latin, and Protestant Churches, each stands aloof. They are separate communions, having no ecclesiastical fellowship whatever. This kind of separation, however, is not so entirely inconsistent with the communion of saints, as the absence of brotherly love, and the presence of all

unholy affections, which characterize to so great an extent these nominal Christians. If it be true that there is a warm sympathy, a real brotherly affection, between all the members of Christ's body, then nothing can be plainer than that the great mass of nominal Christians are not members of that body. The unity of the Spirit, the bond of perfectness, true Christian love, does not unite the members of any extended visible society into one holy brotherhood; and therefore no such society is the Church of Christ.

Romanists answer this argument by vehement assertion. They first degrade the idea of unity into that of outward connection. So that men profess the same faith, they are united in faith, even though many of them be heretics or infidels. If they receive the same sacraments and submit to the same rulers, they are in Christian communion, even though they bite and devour one another. They, then, boldly assert that the Church is confined to themselves; that Greeks, Anglicans, Lutherans, and Reformed, are out of the Church. To make it appear that the Church, in their view of its nature, is one in faith and in communion, they deny that any body of men, or any individual, belongs to the Church, who does not profess their faith and submit to their discipline. Thus even the false, deteriorated idea of unity, which they claim, can be predicated of the Church only by denying the Christian name to more than one-half of Christendom.

The answer given to this argument by Anglicans of the Oxford school, is still less satisfactory. They admit that the Church is one in faith and communion, that either heresy or schism is destructive of all saving connection with the body of Christ. To all appearance, however, the Church of England does not hold the faith of the Church of Rome, nor is she in ecclesiastical communion with her Latin sister. She is also almost as widely separated from the Greek and Oriental Churches. How low must the idea of unity be brought down, to make it embrace all these conflicting bodies! The Oxford writers, therefore, in order to save their Church standing, are obliged, first, to teach with Rome that unity of the Church is merely in appearance or profession; secondly, that England and Rome do not differ as to matters of faith; and, thirdly, that notwithstanding their mutual denunciations, and, on the part of Rome, of the most formal act of excommunication, they are still in communion. The unity of communion therefore, is, according to their doctrine, compatible with non-communion and mutual excommunication. It is, however, a contradiction in terms, to assert that the Churches of Rome and England, in a state of absolute schism in reference to each other, are yet one in faith and communion. The essential attribute of unity, therefore, cannot be predicated of the external Church, either as to doctrine or as to fellowship.

The second form of unity is catholicity. The Church is one, because it embraces all the people of God. This was the prominent idea of unity in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Church is one, because there is none other. Those out of the Church are, therefore, out of Christ, they are not members of his body, nor partakers of his Spirit. This is the universal faith of Christendom. All denominations, in all ages, have, agreeably to the plain teaching of the Scriptures, and the very nature of the gospel, maintained that there is no salvation out of the Church; in other words, that the Church is catholic, embracing all the people of God in all parts of the world. Of course it depends on our idea of the Church, whether this attribute of comprehensive unity belongs to it or not. If the Church is essentially a visible monarchical society, of which the Bishop of Rome is the head, then there can be no true religion and no salvation out of the pale of that society. To admit the possibility of men being saved who are not subject to the Pope, is to admit that they can be saved out of the Church; and to say they can be saved out of the Church, is to say they can be saved out of Christ, which no Christians admit. If the Church is a visible aristocratical society, under the government of prelates having succession, then the unity of the Church implies, that those only who are subject to such prelates are within its pale. There can, therefore, be neither true religion nor salvation except among prelatists. This is a conclusion which flows unavoidably from the idea of the Church as an external visible society. Neither Romanists nor Anglicans shrink from this conclusion. They avow the premises and the inevitable sequence. Mr. Palmer says: "It is not, indeed, to be supposed or believed for a moment, that divine grace would permit the really holy and justified members of Christ to fall from the way of life. He would only permit the unsanctified, the enemies of Christ, to sever themselves from that fountain where his Spirit is given freely." * This he says in commenting on a dictum of Augustin, "Let us hold it as a thing unshaken and firm that no good men can divide themselves from the Church." † He further quotes Irenæus, as saying that God has placed every operation of his Spirit in the Church, so that none have the Spirit but those who are in the Church, "for where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there also the Church and every grace exist." ‡ Cyprian is urged as another authority, who says: "Whoso-

* Palmer on the Church. Vol. i. p. 69.

† *Inconcussum firmumque teneamus, nullos bonos ab ea (ecclesia) se posse dividere.—Adv. Parmenian.* Lib. iii. ch. 5.

‡ *Adv. Hæres*, iii. 24, p. 223,

ever, divorced from the Church, is united to an adulteress, is separated from the Church's promises; nor shall that man attain the rewards of Christ, who relinquishes his Church. He is a stranger, he is profane, he is an enemy." * All this is undoubtedly true. It is true, as Augustin says, that the good cannot divide themselves from the Church; it is true, as Irenæus says, where the Church is, there the Spirit of God is; and where the Spirit is, there the Church is. This is the favourite motto of Protestants. It is also true, as Cyprian says, that he who is separated from the Church, is separated from Christ. This brings the nature of the Church down to a palpable matter of fact. Are there any fruits of the Spirit, any repentance, faith, and holy living, among those who do not obey the Pope? If so, then the Church is not a monarchy, of which the Pope is the head. Is there any true religion, are there any of the people of God who are not subject to prelates? If so, then the Church is not a society subject to bishops having succession. These are questions which can be easily answered. It is, indeed, impossible, in every particular case, to discriminate between true and false professors of religion; but still, as a class, we can distinguish good men from bad men, the children of God from the children of this world. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. By their fruit we can know them. A wolf may indeed at times appear in sheep's clothing, nevertheless, men can distinguish sheep from wolves. We can therefore determine, with full assurance, whether it is true, as the Romish theory of the Church requires, that there is no religion among Protestants, whether all the seemingly pious men of the English Church, for example, are mere hypocrites. This is a question about which no rational man has any doubt, and, therefore, we see not how any such man can fail to see that the Romish theory of the Church is false. It is contradicted by notorious facts. With like assurance we decide against the Anglican theory, because if that theory is true, then there is no religion, and never has been any, out of the pale of the Episcopal Church. It is, however, equivalent to a confession that we ourselves are destitute of the Spirit of Christ, to refuse to recognize as his people the thousands of Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Reformed, who have lived for his service, and died to his glory. Here the ritual theory of the Church breaks down entirely. If the Church is an external society, that society must include all good men, all the children of God in the world. No such society does embrace all such men, and, therefore, the Church is not a visible society. It is a communion of saints. The very fact that a man is a saint, a child of God that is born of the

* *De Unitate*, p. 254.

Spirit, makes him a member of the Church. To say, therefore, with Augustin, that no good man can leave the Church, is only to say that the good will love and cleave to each other; to say, with Irenæus, that where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, is to say the presence of the Spirit makes the Church; and to say with Cyprian, that he who is separated from the Church, is separated from Christ, is only saying, that if a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, he cannot love God whom he hath not seen. If the Church is the communion of saints, it includes all saints; it has catholic unity because it embraces all the children of God. And to say there is no salvation out of the Church, in this sense of the word, is only saying there is no salvation for the wicked, for the unrenewed and unsanctified. But to say there is no piety and no salvation out of the papal or prelatic Church, is very much like doing despite unto the Spirit of God; it is to say of multitudes of true Christians, what the Pharisees said of our Lord; "They cast out devils by Beelzebub, the chief of devils." That is, it is denying the well-authenticated work of the Spirit, and attributing to some other and some evil source, what is really the operation of the Holy Ghost. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there the Church is; and as the Spirit is not only within, but without all external Church organizations, so the Church itself cannot be limited to any visible society.

The historical unity of the Church is its perpetuity; its remaining one and the same in all ages. In this sense, also, the true Church is one. It is now what it was in the days of the apostles. It has continued the same without interruption, from the beginning, and is to continue until the final consummation; for the gates of hell can never prevail against it. About this there is no dispute; all Christians admit the Church to be in this sense perpetual. In asserting the historical unity, or uninterrupted continuance of the Church, all must maintain the unbroken continuance of every thing which, according to their several theories, is essential to its existence. If the Church is a visible society, professing the true faith, and subject to lawful prelates, and especially to the Pope of Rome, then the perpetuity of the Church supposes the continued existence of such a society, thus organized, always professing the true faith, and always subject to its lawful rulers. There must, therefore, always be an external visible society; that society must profess the truth; there must always be prelates legitimately consecrated, and a lawful pope. If, according to the Anglican theory, the Church is precisely what Romanists declare it to be, except subjection to the pope, then its perpetuity involves all the particulars above mentioned, except the continued recognition of the headship of the bishop of Rome. If, on the other hand, the Church is

a company of believers, if it is the communion of saints, all that is essential to its perpetuity is that there should always be believers. It is not necessary that they should be externally organized, much less is it necessary that they should be organized in any prescribed form. It is not necessary that any line of officers should be uninterruptedly continued; much less is it necessary that those officers should be prelates or popes. All that God has promised, and all that we have a right to expect, is, that the true worshippers of the Lord Jesus shall never entirely fail. They may be few and scattered; they may be even unknown to each other, and, in a great measure, to the world; they may be as the seven thousand in the days of the prophet Elijah, who had not bowed the knee unto Baal; still, so long as they exist, the Church, considered as the communion of saints, the mystical body of Christ on earth, continues to exist.

The argument from this source, in favour of the Protestant theory of the Church, is, that in no other sense is the Church perpetual. No existing external society has continued uninterruptedly to profess the true faith. Rome was at one time Arian, at another Pelagian, at another, according to the judgment of the Church of England, idolatrous. All Latin churches were subject to the instability of the Church of Rome. No existing eastern Church has continued the same in its doctrines, from the times of the apostles to the present time. That there has been an uninterrupted succession of popes and prelates, validly consecrated, is admitted to be a matter of faith, and not of sight. From the nature of the case it does not admit of historical proof. The chances, humanly speaking, are as a million to one against it. If it is assumed, it must be on the ground of the supposed necessity of such succession to the perpetuity of the Church, which is a matter of promise. But the Church can exist without a pope, without prelates, yea, without presbyters, if in its essential nature it is the communion of saints. There is, therefore, no promise of an uninterrupted succession of validly ordained church-officers, and consequently no foundation for faith in any such succession. In the absence of any such promise, the historical argument against "apostolic succession," becomes overwhelming and unanswerable.

We must allow the attributes of the Church to determine our conception of its nature. If no external society is perpetual; if every existing visible Church has more than once apostatized from the faith, then the Church must be something which can continue in the midst of the general defection of all external societies; then external organization is not essential to the Church, much less can any particular mode of organization be essential to its existence. The only Church which is holy, which is one, which is catholic, apostolic, and perpetual, is the

communion of saints, the company of faithful men, the mystical body of Christ, whose only essential bond of union is the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. That Spirit, however, always produces faith and love, so that all in whom he dwells are united in faith and Christian fellowship. And as, in virtue of the divine promise, the Spirit is to remain constantly gathering in the people of God, until Christ comes the second time, so the Church can never fail. The attributes, then, of holiness, unity, and perpetuity, do not belong to any external society, and therefore no such society can be the Church. They are all found, in their strictest sense and highest measure, in the communion of saints, and, therefore, the saints constitute the one, holy, apostolic, Catholic Church.

Argument from the promises and prerogatives of the Church.—The Scriptures abound with promises addressed to the Church, and they ascribe certain prerogatives to it. From the character of these promises and prerogatives, we may infer the nature of the Church.

1. The most comprehensive of the promises in question, is that of the continued presence of Christ, by the indwelling of his Spirit. This promise is often given in express terms, and is involved in the description of the Church as the body of Christ and the temple of God. It is not his body, neither is it the temple of God, without the presence of the Spirit. The presence of God is not inoperative. It is like the presence of light and heat, or of knowledge and love, which of necessity manifest themselves by their effects. In like manner, and by a like necessity, the presence of God is manifested by holiness, righteousness, and peace. He is not, where these graces are not; just as certainly as light is not present in the midst of darkness. The promise of God to his Church is, Lo, I am with you always; in every age and in every part of the world; so that where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church; and where the Church is, there is the Spirit. The presence promised is, therefore, a perpetual presence. It is also universal. God does not promise to be with the officers of the Church to the exclusion of the members; nor with some members to the exclusion of others. The soul is not in the head of the human body, to the exclusion of the limbs; nor is it in the eyes and ears, to the exclusion of the hands or feet. So long as it is in the body at all, it is in the whole body. In like manner the promised presence of God with his Church relates to all its members.

If this is so; if God has promised to be with his Church; if his presence is operative; if it is perpetual and all-pervading, then it is plain that this promise was never made to any external society, for to no such society has it ever been fulfilled. No such society has had the persistency in truth and holiness, which the divine presence of necessity

secures. If in one age it professes the truth, in another it professes error. If at one time its members appear holy, at another they are most manifestly corrupt. Or, if some manifest the presence of the Spirit, others give evidence that they are not under his influence. It is, therefore, just as plain that God is not always present with the external Church, as that the sun is not always above our horizon. The nominal Church would correspond with the real, the visible with the invisible, if the promise of the divine presence belonged to the former. With his own people God is always present; they, therefore, must constitute that Church to whom the promise of his presence belongs.

2. The promise of divine teaching is made to the Church. This is included in the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, the source of light and knowledge, wherever he dwells. Christ, when about to leave the world, promised his disciples that he would send them the Spirit, to guide them into all truth. With regard to this promise it is to be remarked, 1. That it is made to all the members of the Church. It is not the peculium of its officers, for it is expressly said, Ye shall be all taught of God. And the apostle John says to all believers, Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 2. It relates only to necessary truths. God has not promised to teach his people all science, nor has he promised to render them infallible in matters of religion. All he has promised, is to teach them whatever is necessary to their salvation, and to qualify them for the work to which they are called. 3. This divine teaching is effectual and abiding. "The anointing," says the apostle, "which ye have received of him, abideth with you." Those who are taught of God, therefore, continue in the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth.

That such divine teaching is not promised to any external society, is plain; 1. Because all the constituent members of no such society are thus divinely taught. The visible Church includes "all sorts of men," good and bad, ignorant and enlightened, heterodox and orthodox, believing and infidel. Of the members of that society, therefore, that is not true which the Scriptures declare to be true, with regard to the members of the Church. They are not all taught of God. 2. Within the pale of every external, and especially of every denominational Church, there is heresy, either secret or avowed. But the teaching of God, as has been shown, precludes the possibility of fundamental error. There may be great diversity of views on many points of doctrine, but as to every thing necessary to salvation, all the members of the body of Christ must agree. It is, however, notorious and avowed, that in the Church of Scotland, of England, and of Rome, all forms of doctrine, from the purest scriptural faith down to the lowest skepticism, are to be found; therefore no such society can be the Church to which

this divine teaching is promised. 3. The teaching of God being perpetual, securing constancy in the acknowledgment of the truth, none but those who continue in the truth can belong to the Church to which that teaching is promised. This fidelity is an attribute of the invisible Church alone, and therefore the communion of saints is the body to which this promise is made.

3. A third promise is that of divine protection. By this promise the Church is secured from internal decay and from external destruction. Its enemies are numerous and powerful; they are ever on the watch, and most insidious in their attacks. Without the constant protection of her divine Sovereign, the Church would soon entirely perish. This promise is made to every individual member of the Church. They are all the members of his body, and his body, redeemed and sanctified, can never perish. No man, he says, shall ever pluck them out of his hand. They may be sorely tempted; they may be seduced into many errors, and even into sin; but Satan shall not triumph over them. They may be persecuted, and driven into the caverns and dens of the earth, but though cast down, they are never forsaken.

That this promise of protection is not made to the external Church is plain, 1. Because multitudes included within the pale of that Church are not the subjects of this divine protection. 2. The external Church has not been preserved from apostasy. Both before and since the advent of Christ, idolatry or false doctrine has been introduced and tolerated by the official organs of that Church. 3. A society dispersed is, for the time being, destroyed. Its organization being dissolved, it ceases to exist as a society. From such disorganization or dispersion, the visible Church has not been protected, and therefore it cannot be the body to which this promise of protection belongs.

4. We find in the Scriptures frequent assurances that the Church is to extend from sea to sea, from the rising to the setting of the sun; that all nations and people are to flow unto it. These promises the Jews referred to their theocracy. Jerusalem was to be the capital of the world; the King of Zion was to be the King of the whole earth, and all nations were to be subject to the Jews. Judaizing Christians interpret these same predictions as securing the universal prevalence of the theocratic Church, with its pope or prelates. In opposition to both, the Redeemer said: "My kingdom is not of this world." His apostles also taught that the kingdom of God consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The extension of the Church, therefore, consists in the prevalence of love to God and man, of the worship and service of the Lord Jesus Christ. It matters not how the saints may be associated; it is not their association, but their faith

and love that makes them the Church, and as they multiply and spread, so does the Church extend. All the fond anticipations of the Jews, founded on a false interpretation of the divine promises, were dissipated by the advent of a Messiah whose kingdom is not of this world. History is not less effectually refuting the ritual theory of the Church, by showing that piety, the worship and obedience of Christ, the true kingdom of God, is extending far beyond the limits which that theory would assign to the dominion of the Redeemer.

5. The great promise made to the Church is holiness and salvation. Christ, it is said, loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. This and similar passages, plainly teach that holiness and salvation are promised to every member of the Church. This is obvious; 1. Because these are blessings of which individuals alone are susceptible. It is not a community or society, as such, that is redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, and saved. Persons, and not communities, are the subjects of these blessings. 2. This follows from the relation of the Church to Christ as his body. The members of the Church are members of Christ. They are in him, partakers of his life, and the subjects of his grace. 3. It is, in fact, a conceded point. It is the common doctrine of all Christians, that out of the Church there is no salvation, and within the Church there is no perdition. It is the doctrine of all ritualists, that those who die in communion with the Church are saved. To this conclusion they are unavoidably led by what the Scriptures teach concerning the Church, as the body of Christ, and temple of God. Protestants admit the justice of the conclusion. They acknowledge that the Bible as plainly teaches that every member of the Church shall be saved, as that every penitent believer shall be admitted into heaven. If this is so, as both parties virtually concede, it determines the nature of the Church. If all the members of the Church are saved, the Church must consist exclusively of saints, and not "of all sorts of men."

Membership in the Church being thus inseparably connected with salvation, to represent the Church as a visible society, is—1. To make the salvation of men to depend upon their external relation, entirely irrespective of their moral character. 2. It is to promise salvation to multitudes against whom God denounces wrath. 3. It is to denounce wrath on many to whom God promises salvation. 4. It therefore utterly destroys the nature of true religion.

The argument for the true doctrine concerning the Church, derived from the divine promises, is this. Those promises, according to the

Scriptures, are made to the humble, the penitent and believing; the Church, therefore, must consist exclusively of the regenerated. Those to whom the promises of divine presence, guidance, protection, and salvation, are made, cannot be a promiscuous multitude of all sorts of men. That theory of the Church, therefore, which makes it an external society, is necessarily destructive of religion and morality. Of religion, because it teaches that our relation to God depends on outward circumstances, and not on the state of the heart and character of the life. If, by an external rite or outward profession, we are made "members of Christ," "the children of God," and "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven;" if we are thus united to that body to which all the promises are made; and if our connection with the Church or body of Christ, can be dissolved only by heresy, schism, or excommunication, then of necessity religion is mere formalism, Church membership is the only condition of salvation, and Church ceremonies the only exercises of piety.

This natural tendency of the theory in question is, indeed, in many minds, counteracted by opposing influences. Men who have access to the Bible, cannot altogether resist the power of its truths. They are thus often saved, in a measure, from the perverting influence of their false views of the Church. The whole tendency, however, of such error, is to evil. It perverts one's views of the nature of religion, and of the conditions of salvation. It leads men to substitute for real piety the indulgence of religious sentiment. They expend on the Church as an æsthetic idea, or as represented in a cathedral, the awe, the reverence, the varied emotions, which similate the fear of God and love of his excellence. This kind of religion often satisfies those whose consciences are too much enlightened, and whose tastes are too much refined, to allow them to make full use of the theory that the visible Church is the body of Christ, and all its members the children of God.

This doctrine is no less destructive of morality than of religion. How can it be otherwise, if all the promises of God are made to men, not as penitent and holy, but as members of an external society; and if membership in that society requires, as Bellarmin and Mr. Palmer, Oxford and Rome, teach, no internal virtue whatever? This injurious tendency of Ritualism is not a matter of logical inference merely. It is abundantly demonstrated by history. The ancient Jews believed that God had made a covenant which secured the salvation of all the natural descendants of Abraham, upon condition of their adherence to the external theocracy. They might be punished for their sins, but, according to their doctrine, no circumcised Israelite ever entered hell. The effect of this doctrine was manifest in their whole spirit and character. External connection with the Church, and practice of its rites

and ceremonies, constituted their religion. They would not eat with unwashen hands, nor pray unless towards Jerusalem; but they would devour widows' houses, and, for a pretence, make long prayers. They were whited sepulchres, fair in the sight of men, but within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. The same effect has been produced by the doctrine which makes salvation depend upon connection with a visible society, in the Greek and Latin Churches. Ecclesiastical services have taken the place of spiritual worship. Corruption of morals has gone hand in hand with the decline of religion. The wicked are allowed to retain their standing in the Church, and are led to consider themselves as perfectly safe so long as embraced within its communion; and no matter what their crimes, they are committed to the dust "in the sure hope of a blessed resurrection."

There is one effect of this false theory of the Church, which ought to be specially noticed. It is the parent of bigotry, religious pride combined with malignity. Those who cry, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, are an abomination in the sight of God. That this spirit is the legitimate fruit of the ritual theory is plain. That theory leads a particular class of men to regard themselves, on the ground of their external relations, as the special favourites of heaven. It is of course admitted that a sense of God's favour, the assurance of his love, is the fountain of all holy affections and right actions. Hence the Bible is filled with the declarations of his love for his people; and hence the Holy Spirit is sent to shed abroad his love in their hearts. The assurance of the divine favour, however, produces holiness, only when we have right apprehensions of God, and of the way in which his love comes to be exercised towards us. When we see that he is of purer eyes than to look upon sin; that it is only for Christ's sake he is propitious to the guilty; that the love and indulgence of sin are proof that we are not the objects of his favour, the more we see of our unworthiness, the more grateful are we for his undeserved love, and the more desirous to be conformed to his image. But when men believe they are the favourites of God, because members of a particular society, that no matter what their personal character, they are objects of God's special love, then the natural and inevitable effect is pride, contempt, intolerance, malignity, and, when they dare, persecution. The empirical proof of the truth of this remark is found in the history of the Jews, of the Brahmins, of the Mohammedans, and of the Christian Church. It is to be found in the practical effect of the doctrine in question, wherever it has prevailed. The Jews regarded themselves as the peculiar favourites of God in virtue of their descent from Abraham, and irrespective of their personal character. This belief rendered them proud, contemptuous, intolerant, and malig-

nant towards all beyond their exclusive circle. In the Christian Church we always find the same spirit connected with this doctrine, expressed under one set of circumstances by anathemas, enforced by the rack and stake; under another, by denying the mercy of God to the penitent and believing, if not subject to "pastors having succession;" by setting up exclusive claims to be the Church of God; by contemptuous language and deportment towards their fellow Christians; and, as in the case of Mr. Palmer, with the open avowal of the right and duty of persecution.

Such are the legitimate effects of this theory; effects which it has never failed to produce. It is essentially Antinomian in its tendency, destructive of true religion, and injurious to holy living, and therefore cannot be in accordance with the word and will of God.

The only answer given to this fatal objection is an evasion. Ritualists abandon *pro hac vice* their theory. They teach, that to the visible Church, Christ has promised his constant presence, his guidance, his protection, and his saving grace; and that in order to membership in this Church, no internal virtue is required, no regeneration, piety, sanctity, visible or invisible. But when it is objected, that if the promises are made to the visible Church, they are made to the wicked, for the wicked are within the pale of that Church, they answer, "The wicked are not really in the Church;" the Church really consists of "the elect, the predestinated, the sanctified."* As soon, however, as this difficulty is out of sight, they return to their theory, and make the Church to consist "of all sorts of men." This temporary admission of the truth, does not counteract the tendency of the constant inculcation of the doctrine that membership in that body to which the promises are made, is secured by external profession. Wherever that doctrine is taught, there the very essence of Antinomianism is inculcated, and there the fruits of Antinomianism never fail to appear.

The same argument, afforded by a consideration of the promises made to the Church to determine its nature, flows from a consideration of its prerogatives. Those prerogatives are the authority to teach, and the right to exercise discipline. These are included in the power of the keys. This is not the place for any formal exhibition of the nature and limitations of this power. To construct the argument to be now presented, it is only necessary to assume what all Christians concede. Christ has given his Church the authority to teach, and to bind and loose. He has promised to ratify her decisions, and to enforce her judgments. In this general statement all denominations of Christians agree. Our present question is, To whom does this power belong?

* Palmer on the Church, I. pp. 28, 58.

To the Church, of course. But is it to the visible Church, as such, irrespective of the spiritual state of its members, or is it to the Church considered as the communion of saints? The answer to this question makes all the difference between Popery and Protestantism, between the Inquisition and the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free.

The prerogative in question does not belong to the visible Church, or to its superior officers, but to the company of believers and their appropriate organs; 1. Because it presupposes the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is only because the Church is the organ of the Spirit of Christ, and therefore only so far as it is his organ, that the teaching of the Church is the teaching of Christ, or that her decisions will be ratified in heaven. It has, however, been abundantly proved from the word of God, that the Holy Spirit dwells only in true believers; they only are his organs, and therefore it is only the teaching and discipline of his own people, as guided by his Spirit, that Christ has promised to ratify. To them alone belongs the prerogative in question, and to any external body, only on the assumption of their being, and only as far as they are what they profess to be, the true children of God. No external visible body, as such, is so far the organ of the Holy Spirit, that its teachings are the teaching of Christ, and its decisions his judgments. No such body is, therefore, the Church to which the power of doctrine, and the key of the kingdom of heaven have been committed.

2. As it is undeniable that the visible Church is always a mixed body, and often controlled in its action by wicked or worldly men, if Christ had promised to ratify the teaching and discipline of that body, he would be bound to sanction what was contrary to his own word and Spirit. It is certain that unrenewed men are governed by the spirit of the world, or by that spirit which works in the children of disobedience, and it is no less certain that the visible Church has often been composed, in great measure, of unrenewed men; if, therefore, to them has been committed this prerogative, then the people of God are, by Christ's own command, bound to obey the world and those governed by its spirit. If wicked men, whether in the Church or out of it, cast us out of their communion, because of the opposition between us and them, it is nothing more than the judgment of the world. It is neither the judgment of Christ, nor of his Church. But if true believers refuse us their fellowship, because of our opposition to them as believers, it is a very different matter. It is one thing to be rejected by the wicked because they are wicked, and quite another to be cast off by the good because they are good. It is only the judgment of his own people, and even of his own people, only as they submit to the guidance of his own

Spirit, (*i. e.*, of his people as his people,) that Christ has promised to ratify in heaven. The condemnation of Christ himself by the Jewish Church, of Athanasius by the Church of the fifth century, of Protestants by the Church of Rome, was but the judgment of the world, and of him who is the god of this world.

3. If the power of the keys is, as ritualists teach, committed to the chief officers of the Church as a visible society, if it is their official prerogative, then there can be no such thing as the right of private judgment. Such a right can have no place in the presence of the Spirit of God. If the chief officers of the Church, without regard to their character, are the organs of that Spirit, then all private Christians are bound to submit without hesitation to all their decisions. This, as is well known, is the doctrine and practice of all those Churches which hold that the promises and prerogatives pertaining to the Church, belong to the Church as a visible society. All private judgment, all private responsibility, are done away. But according to the Scriptures, it is the duty of every Christian to try the spirits whether they be of God, to reject an apostle, or an angel from heaven, should he deny the faith, and of that denial such Christian is of necessity the judge. Faith, moreover, is an act for which every man is personally responsible; his salvation depends upon his believing the truth. He must, therefore, have the right to believe God, let the chief officers of the Church teach what they may. The right of private judgment is, therefore, a divine right. It is incompatible with the ritual theory of the Church, but perfectly consistent with the Protestant doctrine that the Church is the communion of saints. The latter is consequently the true doctrine.

4. The fact that the teaching of the visible Church has so often been contradictory and heretical, that council is against council, one age against another age, one part of the Church against another part, is a clear proof that the prerogative of authoritative teaching was never given by Christ to any such erring body. And the fact that the external Church has so often excommunicated and persecuted the true people of God, is proof positive that hers are not the decisions which are always ratified in heaven.

There are many difficult questions respecting the "power of the keys," which are not here alluded to. All that is now necessary, is to show that this is a prerogative which cannot belong to the visible Church as such. It can belong to her only so far as she is the organ of the Church invisible, to which all the attributes, the promises and prerogatives of the true Church are to be referred. And no more wicked or more disastrous mistake has ever been made, than to transfer to the visible society of professors of the true religion, subject to bishops having succession, the promises and prerogatives of the body

of Christ. It is to attribute to the world the attributes of the Church; to the kingdom of darkness the prerogatives of the kingdom of light. It is to ascribe to wickedness the character and blessedness of goodness. Every such historical Church has been the world baptized; all the men of a generation, or of a nation, are included in the pale of such a communion. If they are the Church, who are the world? If they are the kingdom of light, who constitute the kingdom of darkness? To teach that the promises and prerogatives of the Church belong to these visible societies, is to teach that they belong to the world, organized under a particular form and called by a new name.

CHAPTER II.

THEORIES OF THE CHURCH. [*]

THIS is one of the ablest productions of the Oxford school. The theory of the Church which that school has embraced, is here presented historically, in the first instance, and then sustained by arguments drawn from the design of the Church, as a divine institute, and the common conclusion is arrived at and urged, that the one Church, as described by the author, is the only revealed way of salvation. Archdeacon Manning's work has excited no little attention in England; and its republication in this country, has been warmly welcomed by the Oxford party in America.

We do not propose to make the book before us, the subject of particular examination; but simply to exhibit the theory of the Church which it advocates, in connection and contrast with that which necessarily arises out of the evangelical system of doctrine. The Church as an outward organization is the result and expression of an inward spiritual life; and consequently must take its form from the nature of the life whence it springs. This is only saying, in other words, that our theory of the Church, depends on our theory of doctrine. If we hold a particular system of doctrine, we must hold a corresponding theory of the Church. The two are so intimately connected that they cannot be separated; and it is doubtful whether, as a matter of experience, the system of doctrine most frequently leads to the adoption of a particular view of the Church, or whether the view men take of the

[* *Princeton Review*, article same title, in review of "*The Unity of the Church*, by Henry Edward Manning;" 1846, p. 137.]

Church more generally determines their system of doctrines. In the order of nature, and perhaps also most frequently in experience, the doctrine precedes the theory.

History teaches us that Christianity appears under three characteristic forms; which for the sake of distinction may be called the Evangelical, the Ritual, and the Rationalistic. These forms always co-exist in the Church, and are constantly striving for the mastery. At one period, the one, and at another, another gains the ascendency, and gives character to that period. During the apostolic age, the evangelical system prevailed, though in constant conflict with Ritualism in the form of Judaism. During the next age of the Church we find Rationalism struggling for the ascendency, under the form of Gnosticism and the philosophy of the Platonizing fathers. Ritualism, however, soon gained the mastery, which it maintained almost without a struggle until the time of the Reformation. At that period evangelical truth gained the ascendency which it maintained for more than a hundred years, and was succeeded on the continent by Rationalism, and in England, under Archbishop Laud, by Ritualism. This latter system, however, was there pressed beyond endurance, and the measures adopted for promoting it, led to a violent reaction. The restoration of Charles the II. commenced the reign of the Rationalistic form of doctrine in England, manifesting itself in low Arminian or Pelagian views, and in general indifference. This continued to characterize the Church in Great Britain, until the appearance of Wesley and Whitefield, about a century ago, since which time there has been a constant advance in the prevalence and power of evangelical truth both in England and Scotland. Within the last ten or fifteen years, however, a new movement has taken place, which has attracted the attention of the whole Christian world.

After the fall of Archbishop Laud, the banishment of James II. and the gradual disappearance of the non-jurors, the principles which they represented, though they found here and there an advocate in the Church of England, lay nearly dormant, until the publication of the Oxford Tracts. Since that time their progress has been rapid, and connected with the contemporaneous revival of Popery, constitutes the characteristic ecclesiastical features of the present generation. The Church universal is so united, that no great movement in one portion of it, can be destitute of interest for all the rest. The Church in this country, especially, is so connected with the Church in Great Britain, there are so many channels of reciprocal influence between the two, that nothing of importance can happen there, which is not felt here. The Church in the one country has generally risen and declined, with the Church in the other. The spiritual death which gradually over-

spread England and Scotland from the revolution of 1688 to the rise of Wesley, in no small measure spread its influence over America; and the great revival of religion in England and Scotland before the middle of the last century, was contemporaneous with the revival which extended in this country from Maine to Georgia. The recent progress of Ritualism in England, is accompanied by the spread of the same principles in America. We are not, therefore, uninterested spectators of the struggle now in progress between the two conflicting systems of doctrines and theories of the Church, the Evangelical and the Ritual. The spiritual welfare of our children and of the country is deeply concerned in the issue.

The different forms of religion to which reference has been made, have each its peculiar basis, both objective and subjective. The evangelical form rests on the Scriptures as its objective ground; and its inward or subjective ground is an enlightened conviction of sin. The ritual system rests outwardly on the authority of the Church, or tradition; inwardly on a vague religious sentiment. The rationalistic rests on the human understanding, and internally on indifference. These are general remarks, and true only in the general. Perhaps few persons are under the influence of any one of these forms, to the exclusion of the others; in very few, is the ground of belief exclusively the Bible, tradition, or reason. Yet as general remarks they appear to us correct, and may serve to characterize the comprehensive forms which the Christian religion has been found to assume.

The evangelical system of doctrine starts with the assumption that all men are under the condemnation and power of sin. This is assumed by the sacred writers as a fact of consciousness, and is made the ground of the whole doctrine of redemption. From the guilt of sin there is no method of deliverance but through the righteousness of Christ, and no way in which freedom from its power can be obtained, but through the indwelling of his Spirit. No man who is not united to Christ by a living faith is a partaker either of his righteousness or Spirit, and every man who does truly believe, is a partaker of both, so as to be both justified and sanctified. This union with Christ by the indwelling of his Spirit is always manifested by the fruits of righteousness; by love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Where these fruits of the Spirit are, there, and not elsewhere, is the Spirit; and where the Spirit is, there is union with Christ; and where union with Christ is, there is membership in his body, which is the Church. True believers, therefore, according to the Scriptures, are the κλητοι, the ἐκλεκτοι, the ἐκκλησια. This is the fundamental principle of the evangelical theory respecting the Church. It is the only view at all consistent with the evangelical system of doc-

trine; and as a historical fact, it is the view to which those doctrines have uniformly led. If a man holds that the Church is the body of Christ; that the body of Christ consists of those in whom he dwells by his Spirit; that it is by faith we receive the promise of the Spirit; and that the presence of the Spirit is always manifested by his fruits; then he must hold that no man who does not possess that faith which works by love, is united to Christ or a member of his Church; and that all, no matter how else they may differ, or where they may dwell, who have that faith, are members of that body, which is his Church. Such is the unavoidable conclusion to which the evangelical system leads as to the nature of the Church. The body to whom the attributes, the promises, the prerogatives of the Church belong, consists of all true believers. This also is the turning point between the evangelical and ritual theories, on which all other questions concerning the Church depend. To the question, what is the Church; or, who constitute the Church? the Evangelical answer, and must answer, True believers. The answer of the Ritualists is, The organized professors of the true religion subject to lawful pastors. And according as the one or the other of these answers is adopted, the one or the other theory with its consequences of necessity follows.

The Church, in that sense in which it is the heir of the promises and prerogatives granted in the word of God, consists of true believers, is in one aspect a visible, in another, an invisible body. First, believers as men are visible beings, and by their confession and fruits are visible as believers. "By their fruits ye shall know them." In their character also of believers, they associate for the purposes of worship and discipline, and have their proper officers for instruction and government, and thus appear before the world as a visible body. And secondly, as God has not given to men the power to search the heart, the terms of admission into this body, or in other words, the terms of Christian communion, are not any infallible evidence of regeneration and true faith, but a credible profession. And as many make that profession who are either self-deceived or deceivers, it necessarily follows that many are of the Church, who are not in the Church. Hence arises the distinction between the real and the nominal, or, as it is commonly expressed, the invisible and the visible Church. A distinction which is unavoidable, and which is made in all analogous cases, and which is substantially and of necessity admitted in this case even by those whose whole theory rests on the denial of it. The Bible promises great blessings to Christians; but there are real Christians and nominal Christians; and no one hesitates to make the distinction and to confine the application of these promises to those who are Christians at heart, and not merely in name. The Scriptures promise eternal life to

believers. But there is a dead, as well as a living faith; there are true believers, and those who profess faith without possessing it. No one here again refuses to acknowledge the propriety of the distinction, or hesitates to say that the promise of eternal life belongs only to those who truly believe. In like manner there is a real and a nominal, a visible and an invisible Church, a body consisting of those who are truly united to Christ, and a body consisting of all who profess such union. Why should not this distinction be allowed? How can what is said in Scripture of the Church, be applied to the body of professors, any more than what is said of believers can be applied to the body of professed believers? There is the same necessity for the distinction in the one case, as in the other. And accordingly it is in fact made by those who in terms deny it. Thus Mr. Palmer, an Oxford writer, says, The Church, as composed of its vital and essential members, means "the elect and sanctified children of God;" and adds, "it is generally allowed that the wicked belong only externally to the Church." Vol. I. p. 28, 58. Even Romanists are forced to make the same admission, when they distinguish between the living and dead members of the Church. As neither they nor Mr. Palmer will contend that the promises pertain to the "dead" members, or those who are only externally united to the Church, but must admit them to belong to the "essential" or "living" members, they concede the fundamental principle of the evangelical theory as to the nature of the Church, viz.: that it consists of true believers, and is visible as they are visible as believers by their profession and fruits, and that those associated with them in external union, are the Church only outwardly, and not as constituent members of the body of Christ and temple of God. In this concession is involved an admission of the distinction for which the evangelical contend between the Church invisible and visible, between nominal and real Christians, between true and professing believers.

Such being the view of the nature of the Church and of its visibility, to which the evangelical system of doctrine necessarily leads, it is easy to see wherein the Church is one. If the Church consists of those who are united to Christ and are the members of his body, it is evident that the bond which unites them to him, unites them to each other. They are one body in Christ Jesus, and every one members of one another. The vital bond between Christ and his body is the Holy Spirit; which he gives to dwell in all who are united to him by faith. The indwelling of the Spirit is therefore the essential or vital bond of unity in the Church. By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, for we are partakers of that one Spirit. The human body is one, because animated by one soul; and the Church is one because actuated by one Spirit.

As the Spirit wherever he dwells manifests himself as the Spirit of

truth, of love, and of holiness, it follows that those in whom he dwells must be one in faith, in love, and holy obedience. Those whom he guides, he guides into the knowledge of the truth, and as he cannot contradict himself, those under his guidance, must in all essential matters, believe the same truths. And as the Spirit of love, he leads all under his influence to love the same objects, the same God and Father of all, the same Lord Jesus Christ; and to love each other as brethren. This inward, spiritual union must express itself outwardly, in the profession of the same faith, in the cheerful recognition of all Christians as Christians, that is, in the communion of saints, and in mutual subjection. Every individual Christian recognizes the right of his fellow-Christians to exercise over him a watch and care, and feels his obligation to submit to them in the Lord.

Since however the Church is too widely diffused for the whole to exercise their watch and care over each particular part, there is a necessity for more restricted organizations. Believers therefore of the same neighbourhood, of the same province, of the same nation, may and must unite by some closer bond than that which externally binds the Church as a whole together. The Church of England is one, in virtue of its subjection to a common head, and the adoption of common formularies of worship and discipline. This more intimate union of its several parts with each other, does not in any measure violate its unity with the Episcopal body in this country. And the Presbyterian Church in the United States, though subject to its own peculiar judicatories, is still one with the Church of Scotland. It is evident, and generally conceded, that there is nothing, in independent organization, in itself considered, inconsistent with unity, so long as a common faith is professed, and mutual recognition is preserved. And if independent organization on account of difference of locality or of civil relations, is compatible with unity, so also is independent organization on the ground of diversity of language. The former has its foundation in expediency and convenience, so has the latter. It is not true, therefore, as Ritualists teach, that there cannot be two independent Churches, in the same place. Englishmen in Germany and Germans in England may organize Churches not in organic connection with those around them, with as much propriety as Episcopalians in England and Episcopalians in Scotland may have independent organizations.

Still further, as independent or separate organization is admitted to be consistent with true unity, by all but Romanists, it follows that any reason not destructive of the principle of unity, may be made the ground of such separate organization; not merely difference as to location, or diversity of language, but diversity of opinion. It is on all hands conceded that there may be difference of opinion, within certain

limits, without violating unity of faith; and it is also admitted that there may be independent organization, for considerations of convenience, without violating the unity of communion. It therefore follows, that where such diversity of opinion exists, as to render such separate organization convenient, the unity of the Church is not violated by such separation. Diversity of opinion is indeed an evidence of imperfection, and therefore such separations are evil, so far as they are evidence of want of perfect union in faith. But they are a less evil, than either hypocrisy or contention; and therefore, the diversity of sects, which exist in the Christian world, is to be regarded as incident to imperfect knowledge and imperfect sanctification. They are to be deplored, as every other evidence of such imperfection is to be regretted, yet the evil is not to be magnified above its just dimensions. So long as unity of faith, of love, and of obedience is preserved, the unity of the Church is as to its essential principle safe. It need hardly be remarked, that it is admitted that all separate organization on inadequate grounds, and all diversity of opinion affecting important doctrines, and all want of Christian love and especially a sectarian, unchurching spirit, are opposed to the unity of the Church, and either mar or destroy it according to their nature.

The sense in which the Church is catholic depends on the sense in which it is one. It is catholic only as it is one. If its unity, therefore, depends on subjection to one visible head, to one supreme governing tribunal, to the adoption of the same form of organization, then of course its extent or catholicity are limited by these conditions. If such be the nature of its oneness, then all not subject to such visible head, or governing tribunal, or who do not adopt the form of government assumed to be necessary, are excluded from the Church. But if the unity of the Church arises from union with Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, then all who are thus united to him, are members of his Church, no matter what their external ecclesiastical connections may be, or whether they sustain any such relations at all. And as all really united to Christ are the true Church, so all who profess such union by professing to receive his doctrines and obey his laws, constitute the professing or visible Church. It is plain therefore that the evangelical are the most truly catholic, because, embracing in their definition of the Church all who profess the true religion, they include a far wider range in the Church catholic, than those who confine their fellowship to those who adopt the same form of government, or are subject to the same visible head.

It is easy to see how, according to the evangelical system the question, What is a true Church? is to be answered. Starting with the principle that all men are sinners, that the only method of salvation is by faith

in Jesus Christ, and that all who believe in Him, and show the fruits of faith in a holy life, are the children of God, the called according to his purpose, that is, in the language of the New Testament, the κλητοι, the ἐκκλησια, that system must teach that all true believers are members of the true Church, and all professors of the true faith are members of the visible Church. This is the only conclusion to which that system can lead. And therefore the only essential mark of a true Church which it can admit, is the profession of the true religion. Any individual man who makes a credible profession of religion we are bound to regard as a Christian; any society of such men, united for the purpose of worship and discipline, we are bound to regard as a Church. As there is endless diversity as to the degree of exactness with which individual Christians conform, in their doctrines, spirit and deportment, to the word of God, so there is great diversity as to the degree in which the different Churches conform to the same standard. But as in the case of the individual professor we can reject none who does not reject Christ, so in regard to Churches, we can disown none who holds the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

Against this simple and decisive test of a true Church it is objected on the one hand, that it is too latitudinarian. The force of this objection depends upon the standard of liberality adopted. It is of course too latitudinarian for Romanists and High Churchmen, as well as for rigid sectarians. But is it more liberal than the Bible, and our own Confession of Faith? Let any man decide this question by ascertaining what the Bible teaches as the true answer to the question, what is a Christian? And what is a Church? You cannot possibly make your notion of a Church narrower than your notion of a Christian. If a true Christian is a true believer, and a professed believer is a professing Christian, then of course a true Church is a body of true Christians, a professsing or visible Church is a body of professing Christians. This is the precise doctrine of our standards, which teach that the Church consists of all those who profess the true religion.

On the other hand, however, it is objected that it cannot be expected of ordinary Christians that they should decide between the conflicting creeds of rival churches, and therefore the profession of the truth cannot be the mark of a true Church. To this objection it may be answered first, that it is only the plain fundamental doctrines of the gospel which are necessary to salvation, and therefore it is the profession of those doctrines alone, which is necessary to establish the claim of any society to be regarded as a portion of the true Church. Secondly, that the objection proceeds on the assumption that such doctrines cannot by the people be gathered from the word of God. If however the Scriptures are the rule of faith, so plain that all men may

learn from them what they must believe and do in order to be saved, then do they furnish an available standard by which they may judge of the faith both of individuals and of Churches. Fourthly, this right to judge and the promise of divine guidance in judging are given in the Scriptures to all the people of God, and the duty to exercise the right is enjoined upon them as a condition of salvation. They are pronounced accursed if they do not try the spirits, or if they receive any other gospel than that taught in the Scriptures. And fifthly, this doctrinal test is beyond comparison more easy of application than any other. How are the unlearned to know that the Church with which they are connected has been derived, without schism or excommunication, from the Churches founded by the apostles? What can they tell of the apostolical succession of pastors? These are mere historical questions, the decision of which requires great learning, and involves no test of character, and yet the salvation of men is made to depend on that decision. All the marks of the Church laid down by Romanists and High Churchmen, are liable to two fatal objections. They can be verified, if at all, only by the learned. And secondly, when verified, they decide nothing. A Church may have been originally founded by the apostles, and possess an uninterrupted succession of pastors, and yet be a synagogue of Satan.

The theory of the Church, then, which of necessity follows from the evangelical system of doctrine is, that all who really believe the gospel constitute the true Church, and all who profess such faith constitute the visible Church; that in virtue of the profession of this common faith, and of allegiance to the same Lord, they are one body, and in this one body there may rightly be subordinate and more intimate unions of certain parts, for the purposes of combined action, and of mutual oversight and consolation. When it is said, in our Confession of Faith, that out of this visible Church, there is no ordinary possibility of salvation, it is only saying that there is no salvation without the knowledge and profession of the gospel; that there is no other name by which we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. The proposition that "out of the Church there is no salvation" is true or false, liberal or illiberal, according to the latitude given to the word Church. There was not long since, and probably there is still in New York a little society of Sandemanian Baptists, consisting of seven persons, two men and five women, who hold that they constitute the whole Church in America. In their mouths the proposition above stated would indeed be restrictive. In the mouth of a Romanist, it means there is no salvation to any who do not belong to that body which acknowledges the Pope as its head. In the mouths of High Churchmen, it means there is no salvation to those who are not in sub-

jection to some prelate who is in communion with the Church catholic. While in the mouths of Protestants, it means there is no salvation without faith in Jesus Christ.

The system, which for the sake of distinction has been called the Ritual, agrees of course with the evangelical as to many points of doctrine. It includes the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, of original sin, of the sacrifice of Christ as a satisfaction to satisfy divine justice, of the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification, of the resurrection of the body and of an eternal judgment. The great distinction lies in the answer which it gives the question, what must I do to be saved? or by what means does the soul become interested in the redemption of Christ? According to the Evangelical system, it is faith. Every sinner who hears the gospel has unimpeded access to the Son of God, and can, in the exercise of faith and repentance, go immediately to him, and obtain eternal life at his hands. According to the Ritual system, he must go to the priest; the sacraments are the channels of grace and salvation, and the sacraments can only be lawfully or effectively administered by men prelatically ordained. The doctrine of the priestly character of the Christian ministry, therefore, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Ritual system. A priest is a man ordained for men, in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices. The very nature of the office supposes that those for whom he acts, have not in themselves liberty of access to God; and therefore the Ritual system is founded on the assumption that we have not this liberty of drawing nigh to God. It is only by the ministerial intervention of the Christian priesthood, that the sinner can be reconciled and made a partaker of salvation. Here then is a broad line of distinction between the two systems of doctrines. This was one of the three great doctrines rejected by Protestants, at the time of the Reformation. They affirmed the priesthood of all believers, asserting that all have access to God through the High Priest of their profession, Jesus, the Son of God; and they denied the official priesthood of the clergy.

The second great distinction between the two systems of doctrine, is the place they assign the sacraments. The evangelical admit them to be efficacious signs of grace, but they ascribe their efficacy not to any virtue in them or in him by whom they are administered, but to the influence of the Spirit in them that do by faith receive them. Ritualists attribute to them an inherent virtue, an *opus operatum* efficacy, independent of the moral state of the recipient. According to the one system, the sacraments are necessary only as matters of precept; according to the other, they have the necessity of means. According to the one, we are required to receive baptism, just as we are under

obligation to keep the Sabbath, or as the Jews were required to be circumcised, and yet we are taught that if any man kept the law, his uncircumcision should be counted for circumcision. And thus also, if any one truly repents and believes, his want of baptism cannot make the promise of God of none effect. The neglect of such instituted rites may involve more or less sin, or none at all, according to the circumstances. It is necessary only as obedience to any other positive institution is necessary; that is, as a matter of duty, the non-performance of which ignorance or disability may palliate or excuse. According to the latter system, however, we are required to receive baptism because it is the only appointed means of conveying to us the benefits of redemption. It is of the same necessity as faith. It is a *sine qua non.* This alters the whole nature of the case, and changes in a great measure the plan of redemption.

The theory of the Church connected with the Ritual system of doctrine, that system which makes ministers priests, and the sacraments the only appointed channels of communicating to men the benefits of redemption, is implied in the nature of the doctrines themselves. It makes the Church so prominent that Christ and the truth are eclipsed. This made Dr. Parr call the whole system Churchianity, in distinction from Christianity.

If our Lord, when he ascended to heaven, clothed his apostles with all the power which he himself possessed in his human nature, so that they were to the Church what he himself had been, its infallible teachers and the dispensers of pardon and grace; and if in accordance with that assumption, the apostles communicated this power to their successors, the prelates, then it follows that these prelates and those whom they may authorize to act in their name, are the dispensers of truth and salvation, and communion with them, or subjection to their authority, is essential to union with the Church and to eternal life. The Church is thus represented as a store-house of divine grace; whose treasures are in the custody of its officers, to be dealt out by them, and at their discretion. It is like one of the rich convents of the middle ages; to whose gates the people repaired at stated times for food. The convent was the store-house. Those who wanted food must come to its gates. Food was given at the discretion of its officers, to what persons and on what conditions they saw fit. To obtain supplies, it was of course necessary to recognize the convent as the depository, and its officers as the distributors; and none who refused such recognition, could be fed from its stores. The analogy fails indeed as to an essential point. Food could be obtained elsewhere than at the convent gates; and none need apply, who did not choose to submit to the prescribed conditions. Whereas ac-

cording to Ritualists, the food of the soul can be obtained nowhere but at the doors of the Church; and those who refuse to receive it there, and at the hands of authorized ministers, and on the terms they prescribe, cannot receive it at all. Unless in communion of the Church we cannot be saved; and unless in subjection to prelates deriving the gift of the Spirit by regular succession from the apostles, we cannot be in communion of the Church. The subjection to the bishop, therefore, is an indispensable condition of salvation. He is the centre of unity; the bond of union between the believer and the Church, and thus with Christ.

The unity of the Church, according to this theory, is no longer a spiritual union; not a unity of faith and love, but a union of association, a union of connection with the authorized dispensers of saving grace. It is not enough for any society of men to show that they are united in faith with the apostles, and in heart with all the people of God, and with Christ by the indwelling of his Spirit, as manifested by his fruits, they cannot be recognized as any portion of the true Church, unless they can prove historically their descent as a society from the apostles through the line of bishops. They must prove themselves a Church, just as a man proves his title to an estate. No Church, says Mr. Palmer, not founded by the apostles, or regularly descended from such a Church without separation or excommunication, can be considered a true Church; and every society that can make out such a descent is a true Church, for a Church can only cease to be united to Christ by its own act of separation, or by the lawful judgment of others, Vol. I. p. 84.

This also is what is meant by apostolicity as an attribute and mark of the Church. A Church is not apostolical because it holds the doctrines, and conforms to the institutions of the apostles, but because it is historically derived from them by an uninterrupted descent. "Any society which is in fact derived from the apostles, must be so by spiritual propagation, or derivation, or union, not by separation from the apostles or the Churches actually derived from their preaching, under pretence of establishing a new system of supposed apostolic perfection. Derivation from the apostles, is, in the former case, a reality, just as much as the descent of an illustrious family from its original founder. In the latter case it is merely an assumption in which the most essential links of the genealogy are wanting." Palmer, Vol. I. p. 160. This descent must be through prelates, who are the bonds of connection between the apostles and the different portions of the one catholic and apostolic Church. Without regular consecration there can be no bishop, and without a bishop no Church, and out of the Church no salvation.

The application of these principles as made by their advocates,

reveals their nature and importance, more distinctly than any mere verbal statement of them. The Methodists, for example, though they adopt the doctrinal standards of the Church of England, and have the same form of government, are not and never can become, according to this theory, a part of the Church, because the line of descent was broken by Wesley. He was but a presbyter and could not continue the succession of the ministry. A fatal flaw thus exists in their ecclesiastical pedigree, and they are hopelessly cut off from the Church and from salvation.

The Roman and Eastern Churches, on the contrary, are declared to be true Churches, because descended from the communions founded by the apostles, and because they have never been separated from the Church catholic either by voluntary secession or by excommunication. The Nestorians, on the other hand, are declared to be no part of the true Church; for though they may now have the orthodox faith, and though they have preserved the succession of bishops, they were excommunicated in the fifth century, and that sentence has never been revoked.

The Church of England is declared to be a true Church, because it has preserved the succession, and because, although excommunicated by the Church of Rome, that sentence has not been ratified by the Church universal. All other ecclesiastical societies in Great Britain and Ireland, whether Romanist or Protestant, are pronounced to be cut off from the Church and out of the way of salvation. This position is openly avowed, and is the necessary consequence of the theory. As the Romanists in those countries, though they have the succession, yet they voluntarily separate themselves from the Church of England, which as that is a true Church, is to separate themselves from the Church of Christ, a sin which is declared to be of the same turpitude as adultery and murder, and as certainly excludes from heaven. As to all other Protestant bodies, the case is still plainer. They have not only separated from the Church, but lost the succession, and are therefore out of the reach of the benefits of redemption, which flow only in the line of that succession.

The Church of Scotland is declared to be in the same deplorable condition. Though under the Stuarts episcopacy was established in that country, yet it was strenuously resisted by the people; and under William III. it was, by a joint act of the Assembly and Parliament formally rejected; they thereby separated themselves from the successors of the apostles, "and all the temporal enactments and powers of the whole world could not cure this fault, nor render them a portion of the Church of Christ." Palmer, Vol. I. p. 529. The same judgment is pronounced on all the Churches in this country except the Church of England. The Romanists here are excluded, because they

are derived from the schismatic Papists in Great Britain and Ireland, or have intruded into sees where bishops deriving authority from the Anglican Church already presided. How this can be historically made out as regards Maryland and Louisiana, it is not for us to say. The theory forbids the existence of two separate Churches in the same place. If the Church of England in Maryland is a true Church, the Church of Rome is not. Bishop Whittingham, therefore, with perfect consistency, always speaks of the Romanists in the United States as schismatics, and schismatics of course are out of the Church. As to non-episcopal communions in this country, they are not only declared to be in a state of schism, but to be destitute of the essential elements of the Church. They are all, therefore, of necessity excluded from the pale of the Church. The advocates of this theory, when pressed with the obvious objection that multitudes thus excluded from the Church, and consequently from salvation, give every evidence of piety, meet the objection by quoting Augustine, "Let us hold it as a thing unshaken and firm, that no good men *can* divide themselves from the Church." "It is not indeed to be supposed or believed for a moment," adds Mr. Palmer, "that divine grace would permit the really holy and justified members of Christ to fall from the way of life. He would only permit the unsanctified, the enemies of Christ to sever themselves from that fountain, where his Spirit is freely given." Voluntary separation therefore from the Church, he concludes is "a sin which, unless repented of, is eternally destructive of the soul. The heinous nature of this offence is incapable of exaggeration, because no human imagination, and no human tongue can adequately describe its enormity." Vol. I. p. 68. The only Church in Great Britain, according to Mr. Palmer, be it remembered, is the Church of England, and the only Church in this country according to the same theory and its advocates, is the Episcopal Church. Thus the knot is fairly cut. It is apparently a formidable difficulty, that there should be more piety out of the Church, than in it. But the difficulty vanishes at once, when we know that "no good man *can* divide himself from the Church."

If this theory were new, if it were now presented for the first time, it would be rejected with indignation and derision; indignation at its monstrous and unscriptural claims, and derision at the weakness of the arguments by which it is supported. But age renders even imbecility venerable. It must also be conceded that a theory which has for centuries prevailed in the Church, must have something to recommend it. It is not difficult to discover, in the present case, what that something is. The Ritual theory of the Church is perfectly simple and consistent. It has the first and most important element of success in being intelligible. That Christ should found a Church, or external society, giving to his

apostles the Holy Spirit to render them infallible in teaching and judging, and authorize them to communicate the like gift to their successors to the end of time; and make it a condition of salvation that all should recognize their spiritual authority, receive their doctrines and submit to their decisions, declaring that what they bound on earth should be bound in heaven, and what they loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven, is precisely the plan which the wise men of this world would have devised. It is in fact that which they have constructed. We must not forget, however, that the wisdom of men is foolishness with God.

Again, this theory admits of being propounded in the forms of truth. All its fundamental principles may be stated in a form to command universal assent. It is true that the Church is one, that it is catholic and apostolical; that it has the power of authoritative teaching and judging; that out of its pale there is no salvation. But this system perverts all these principles. It places the bond of unity in the wrong place. Instead of saying with Jerome, *Ecclesia ibi est, ubi vera fides est*, or with Irenæus, *ubi Spiritus Dei, illic ecclesia*, they assume that the Church is nowhere, where prelates are not. The true apostolicity of the Church, does not consist in an external descent to be historically traced from the early Churches, but in sameness of faith and Spirit with the apostles. Separation from the Church is indeed a great sin; but there is no separation from the Church involved in withdrawing from an external body whose terms of communion hurt the enlightened conscience; provided this be done without excommunicating or denouncing those who are really the people of God.

The great advantage of this theory, however, is to be found in its adaptation to the human heart. Most men who live where the gospel is known, desire some better foundation for confidence towards God, than their own good works. To such men the Church, according to this theory, presents itself as an Institute of Salvation; venerable for its antiquity, attractive from the number and rank of its disciples, and from the easy terms on which it proffers pardon and eternal life. There are three very comprehensive classes of men to whom this system must commend itself. The first consists of those who are at once ignorant and wicked. The degraded inhabitants of Italy and Portugal have no doubt of their salvation, no matter how wicked they may be, so long as they are in the Church and submissive to officers and rites. The second includes those who are devout and at the same time ignorant of the Scriptures. Such men feel the need of religion, of communion with God, and of preparation for heaven. But knowing nothing of the gospel, or disliking what they know, a form of religion which is laborious, mystical, and ritual, meets all their necessities, and

commands their homage. The third class consists of worldly men, who wish to enjoy this life and get to heaven with as little trouble as possible. Such men, the world over, are high-churchmen. To them a Church which claims the secure and exclusive custody of the blessings of redemption, and which she professes to grant on the condition of unresisting submission to her authority and rites, is exactly the Church they desire. We need not wonder, therefore, at the long continued and extensive prevalence of this system. It is too much in accordance with the human heart, to fail of its support, or to be effectually resisted by any power short of that by which the heart is changed.

It is obvious that the question concerning the nature and prerogatives of the Church, is not one which relates to the externals of religion. It concerns the very nature of Christianity and the conditions of salvation. If the soul convinced of sin and desirous of reconciliation with God, is allowed to hear the Saviour's voice, and permitted to go to him by faith for pardon and the Spirit, then the way of life is unobstructed. But if a human priest must intervene, and bar our access to Christ, assuming the exclusive power to dispense the blessings Christ has purchased, and to grant or withhold them at discretion, then the whole plan of salvation is effectually changed. No sprinkling priest, no sacrificial or sacramental rite can be substituted for the immediate access of the soul to Christ, without imminent peril of salvation.

It is not, however, merely the first approach to God, or the commencement of a religious life, that is perverted by the ritual system; all the inward and permanent exercises of religion must be modified and injured by it. It produces a different kind of religion from that which we find portrayed in the Bible, and exemplified in the lives of the apostles and early Christians. There everything is spiritual. God and Christ are the immediate objects of reverence and love; communion with the Father of Spirits through Jesus Christ his Son, and by the Holy Ghost, is the life which is there exhibited. In the Ritual system, rites, ceremonies, altars, buildings, priests, saints, the blessed virgin, intervene and divide or absorb the reverence and homage due to God alone. If external rites and creature agents are made necessary to our access to God, then those rites and agents will more or less take the place of God, and men will come to worship the creature rather than the creator. This tendency constantly gathers strength, until actual idolatry is the consequence, or until all religion is made to consist in the performance of external services. Hence this system is not only destructive of true religion, but leads to security in the indulgence of sin and commission of crimes. Though it includes among its advocates many devout and exemplary men, its

legitimate fruits are recklessness and profligacy, combined with superstition and bigotry. It is impossible, also, under this system, to avoid transferring the subjection of the understanding and conscience due to God and his word, to the Church and the priesthood. The judgments of the Church, considered as an external visible society, are pronounced even by the Protestant advocates of this theory, to be unerring and irrefragable, to which every believer must bow on pain of perdition. See Palmer, Vol. II. p. 46. The bishops are declared to stand in Christ's place; to be clothed with all the authority which he as man possessed; to be invested with the power to communicate the Holy Ghost, to forgive sins, to make the body and blood of Christ, and to offer sacrifices available for the living and the dead. Such a system must exalt the priesthood into the place of God.

A theory, however, which has so long prevailed need not be judged by its apparent tendencies. Let it be judged by its fruits. It has always and everywhere, just in proportion to its prevalence, produced the effects above referred to. It has changed the plan of salvation; it has rendered obsolete the answer given by Paul to the question, What must I do to be saved? It has perverted religion. It has introduced idolatry. It has rendered men secure in the habitual commission of crime. It has subjected the faith, the conscience, and the conduct of the people to the dictation of the priesthood. It has exalted the hierarchy, saints, angels, and the Virgin Mary, into the place of God, so as to give a polytheistic character to the religion of a large part of Christendom. Such are the actual fruits of that system which has of late renewed its strength, and which everywhere asserts its claims to be received as genuine Christianity.

It will not be necessary to dwell on that theory of the Church which is connected with Rationalism. Its characteristic feature is, that the Church is not a divine institution, with prerogatives and attributes authoritatively determined by its author, but rather a form of Christian society, to be controlled according to the wisdom of its members. It may be identified with the state, or made dependent on it; or erected into a co-ordinate body with its peculiar officers and ends. It is obvious that a system which sets aside, more or less completely, the authority both of Scripture and tradition, must leave its advocates at liberty to make of the Church just what "the exigency of the times" in their judgment requires. The philosophical or mystic school of Rationalists, have of course a mystical doctrine of the Church, which can be understood only by those who understand the philosophy on which it rests. With these views we have in this country little concern, nor do we believe they are destined to excite any general interest, or to exert any permanent influence. The two theories of the Church

which are now in obvious conflict, are the Evangelical and Ritual. The controversy between Protestants and Romanists, has, in appearance, shifted its ground from matters of doctrine to the question concerning the Church. This is, however, only a change in form. The essential question remains the same. It is still a contention about the very nature of religion, and the method of salvation.

CHAPTER III.

VISIBILITY OF THE CHURCH. [*]

OUR view of the attributes of the Church is of necessity determined by our view of its nature. There is no dispute between Romanists and Protestants, as to whether the Church is visible, perpetual, one, holy, catholic, and apostolical. This is universally conceded. The only question is as to the sense in which these attributes can be predicated of it. If the Church is, in its essential nature and external organization, analogous to an earthly kingdom, then its visibility, perpetuity, and all its other attributes, must be such as can pertain to such an organization. When we affirm that an earthly kingdom is visible and perpetual, we mean that its organization as a kingdom is conspicuous, notorious, seen of all men, and unchanging. The kingdoms of Babylon, Egypt, and of Rome, have passed away. They are no longer visible or extant. The Papacy has a visible existence of the same kind, and Romanists affirm it is to continue while the world lasts. The kingdom of England is the body of men professing allegiance to its laws, and subject to its sovereign. The Church, according to Romanists, is the body of men professing the true religion, and subject to the Pope. Bellarmin, therefore, says: "*Ecclesia est cœtus hominum, ita visibilis et palpabilis, ut est cœtus Populi Romani, vel regnum Galliæ aut respublica Venetorum.*" † As these bodies are equally external organizations, the visibility of the one is analogous to that of the other.

But if the Church is the *cœtus sanctorum*, the company of believers; if it is the body of Christ, and if his body consists of those, and of those only, in whom he dwells by his Spirit, then the Church is visible only, in the sense in which believers are visible. England stands out

[*Article, same title, *Princeton Review*, 1853, p. 670.]

† *Disputationes; de Ecclesia Militante.* Lib. iii. c. 2.

before the world as an earthly kingdom; the members of Christ's body in England are no less conspicuous. That believers are there, that the Church is there, is a fact which can no more be rationally disputed, than the existence of the monarchy. But it does not follow that because equally visible, they are equally external organizations, and that to deny that the Church, in its idea, is an external society, is to deny that it is visible. Protestants teach that the true Church, as existing on earth, is always visible:

1. As it consists of men and women, in distinction from disembodied spirits or angels. Its members are not impalpable and unseen, as those ministering spirits who, unrevealed to our senses, continually minister to the heirs of salvation. "Surely," exclaims Bellarmin, "the Church does not consist of ghosts!" Certainly not: and the suggestion of such an objection betrays an entire misconception of the doctrine he was opposing. Protestants admit that the Church on earth consists of visible men and women, and not of invisible spirits.

2. The Church is visible, because its members manifest their faith by their works. The fact that they are the members of Christ's body becomes notorious. Goodness is an inward quality, and yet it is outwardly manifested, so that the good are known and recognized as such; not with absolute certainty in all cases, but with sufficient clearness to determine all questions of duty respecting them. So, though faith is an inward principle, it so reveals itself in the confession of the truth, and in a holy life, that believers may be known as a tree is known by its fruit. In the general prevalence of Arianism, the true Church neither perished nor ceased to be visible. It continued to exist, and its existence was manifested in the confessors and martyrs of that age. "When," says Dr. Jackson, "the doctrine of antichrist was come to its full growth in the Council of Trent, although the whole body of Germany, besides Chemnitz and others, and although the whole visible Church of France, besides Calvin and some such, had subscribed unto that Council, yet the true Church had been visible in those worthies."* Wherever there are true believers, there is the true Church; and wherever such believers confess their faith, and illustrate it by a holy life, there the Church is visible.

3. The Church is visible, because believers are, by their "effectual calling," separated from the world. Though in it, they are not of it. They have different objects, are animated by a different spirit, and are distinguished by a different life. They are visible, as a pure river is often seen flowing unmingled through the turbid waters of a broader stream. When the Holy Spirit enters into the heart, renewing it after

* Treatise on the Church, p. 19, Philadelphia edition.

the image of God, uniting the soul to Christ as a living member of his body, the man becomes a new creature. All men take knowledge of him. They see that he is a Christian. He renounces the ways of the world, separates himself from all false religions, becomes an open worshipper of Christ, a visible member of the Church, which is Christ's body. When the early Christians heard the words of eternal life, and received the gospel in faith, they at once renounced idolatry, withdrew from all corrupt associations, and manifested themselves as a new people, the followers of the Lord Jesus. They were visible members of his body. Even though there was but one such man in a city, still the fact that he was a Christian became notorious; and if a visible Christian, a visible member of the Church. The true Church is thus visible throughout the world, not as an organization, not as an external society, but as the living body of Christ; as a set of men distinguished from others as true Christians. They are the epistles of Jesus Christ, known and read of all men. This is a visibility which is real, and may be, and often has been, and will hereafter be, glorious. The Church, in this sense, is a city set on a hill. She is the light of the world. She is conspicuous in the beauty of holiness. This is not, indeed, the visibility of a hierarchy, gorgeous in apparel, pompous in ritual services—a kingdom which is of this world. But it is not the less real, and infinitely more glorious. How unfounded, then, is the objection that the Church, the body of Christ, is a chimera, a Platonic idea, unless it is, in its essential nature, a visible society, like the kingdom of England or Republic of Switzerland! Apart from any outward organization, and in the midst of all organizations, the true Church is now visible, and she has left a track of glory through all history, since the day of Pentecost, so that it can be traced and verified, in all ages and in all parts of the world.

4. The true Church is visible in the external Church, just as the soul is visible in the body. That is, as by the means of the body we know that the soul is there, so by means of the external Church, we know where the true Church is. There are, doubtless, among Mohammedans, many insincere and skeptical professors of the religion of the false prophet. No one can tell who they are, or how many there may be. But the institutions of Mohammedanism, its laws, its usages, its mosques, its worship, make it as apparent as the light of day, that sincere believers in Mahomet exist, and are the life of the external communities consisting of sincere and insincere followers of the prophet. So the external Church, as embracing all who profess the true religion —with their various organizations, their confessions of the truth, their temples, and their Christian worship—make it apparent that the true Church, the body of Christ, exists, and where it is. These are not the

Church, any more than the body is the soul; but they are its manifestations, and its residence. This becomes intelligible by adverting to the origin of the Christian community. The admitted facts in reference to this subject are—1. That our Lord appeared on earth as the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. To all who received him he gave power to become the sons of God; they were justified and made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and thereby united to Christ as living members of his body. They were thus distinguished inwardly and outwardly from all other men. 2. He commissioned his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He enjoined upon them to require as the conditions of any man's being admitted into their communion as a member of his body, repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

He commanded all who did thus repent and believe, to unite together for his worship, for instruction, for the administration of the sacraments, and for mutual watch and care. For this purpose he provided for the appointment of certain officers, and gave, through his apostles, a body of laws for their government, and for the regulation of all things which those who believed were required to perform. Provision was thus made, by divine authority, for the Church assuming the form of an external visible society.

Let us now suppose that all those who, in every age, and in every part of the world, professed the true religion, and thereby united themselves to this society, were true believers, then there would be no room for the distinction, so far as this world is concerned, between the Church as visible and invisible. Then this external society would be Christ's body on earth. All that is predicated of the latter could be predicated of the former; all that is promised to the one would be promised to the other. Then this society would answer to the definition of the Church, as a company of believers. Then all within it would be saved, and all out of it would be lost. The above hypothesis, however, is undeniably false, and therefore the conclusions drawn from it must also be false. We know that even in the apostolic age, many who professed faith in Christ, and ranked themselves with his people, were not true believers. We know that in every subsequent age, the great majority of those who have been baptized in the name of Christ, and who call themselves Christians, and who are included in the external organization of his followers, are not true Christians. This external society, therefore, is not a company of believers; it is not the Church which is Christ's body; the attributes and promises of the Church do not belong to it. It is not that living temple built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets as an habitation of God, through the Spirit. It is not the bride of Christ, for which he died,

and which he cleanses with the washing of regeneration. It is not the flock of the good Shepherd, composed of the sheep who hear his voice, and to whom it is his Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. In short, the external society is not the Church. The two are not identical, commensurate, and conterminous, so that he who is a member of the one is a member of the other, and he who is excommunicated from the one is cut off from the other. Yet the Church is in that society, or the aggregate body of professing Christians, as the soul is in the body, or as sincere believers are comprehended in the mass of the professors of the religion of Christ.

If, then, the Church is the body of Christ; if a man becomes a member of that body by faith; if multitudes of those who profess in baptism the true religion, are not believers, then it is just as certain that the external body consisting of the baptized is not the Church, as that a man's calling himself a Christian does not make him a Christian. Yet there would be no nominal Christians, if there were no sincere disciples of Christ. The name and form of his religion would long since have perished from the world. The existence of the external Church, its continuance, its influence for good, its spiritual power, its extension, its visible organizations, are all due to the living element which it embraces, and which in these various ways manifests its presence. It is thus that the true Church is visible in the outward, though the one is no more the other than the body is the soul.

That the Protestant doctrine as to the visibility of the Church, above stated, is true, is evident, in the first place, from what has already been established as to the nature of the Church. Everything depends upon the answer to the question, What is the Church? If it is an external society of professors of the true religion, then it is visible as an earthly kingdom; if that society is destroyed, the Church is destroyed, and everything that is true of the Church is true of that society. Then, in short, Romanism must be admitted as a logical necessity. But if the Church is a company of believers, then its visibility is that which belongs to believers; and nothing is true of the Church which is not true of believers.

2. The Protestant distinction between the Church visible and invisible, nominal and real, is that which Paul makes between "Israel after the flesh," and "Israel after the Spirit." God had promised to Israel that he would be their God, and that they should be his people; that he would never forsake or cast them off; that he would send his Son for their redemption; dwell in them by his Spirit; write his laws in their hearts; guide them into the knowledge of the truth; that he would give them the possession of the world, and the inheritance of heaven; that all who joined them should be saved, and all who forsook them should

perish. The Jews claimed all these promises for the external organization, *i. e.* for the natural descendants of Abraham, united to him and to each other by the outward profession of the covenant, and by the sign of circumcision, They held, that external conformity to Judaism made a man a Jew, a member of that body to which all these promises and prerogatives belonged; and, consequently, that the apostasy or rejection of that external body would involve the destruction of the Church, and a failure of the promise of God. In like manner Ritualists teach that what is said and promised to the Church belongs to the external visible society of professing Christians, and that the destruction of that society would be the destruction of the Church.

In opposition to all this, Paul taught, 1. That he is not a Jew who is one outwardly. 2. Circumcision, which was outward, in the flesh, did not secure an interest in the divine promises. 3. That he only was a Jew, *i. e.* one of the true people of God, who was such in virtue of the state of his heart. 4. That the body to which the divine promises were made, was not the outward organization, but the inward, invisible body; not the Israel κατα σαρκα but the Israel κατα πνευμα. This is the Protestant doctrine of the Church, which teaches that he is not a Christian who is such by mere profession, and that it is not water baptism which makes a man a member of that body to which the promises are made, and consequently that the visibility of the Church is not that which belongs to an external society, but to true believers, or the communion of saints.

The perversion and abuse of terms, and the false reasoning to which Romanists resort, when speaking of this subject, are so palpable, that they could not be tolerated in any ordinary discussion. The word *Christian* is just as ambiguous as the word *Church*. If called upon to define a Christian, they would not hesitate to say—He is a man who believes the doctrines and obeys the commands of Christ. The inevitable inference from this definition is, that the attributes, the promises, and prerogatives pertaining to Christians, belong to those only who believe and obey the Lord Jesus. Instead, however, of admitting this unavoidable conclusion, which would overthrow their whole system, they insist that all these attributes, promises, and prerogatives, belong to the body of professing Christians, and that it is baptism and subjection to a prelate or the pope, and not faith and obedience towards Christ, which constitute membership in the true Church.

3. The same doctrine taught by the apostle Paul, is no less plainly taught by the apostle John. In his day many who had been baptized, and received into the communion of the external society of Christians, were not true believers. How were they regarded by the apostle? Did their external profession make them members of the true Church,

to which the promises pertain? St. John answers this question by saying, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that it might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." 1 John ii. 19, 20. It is here taught, 1. That many are included in the pale of the external Church, who are not members of the true Church. 2. That those only who have an unction of the Holy One, leading them into the knowledge of the truth, constitute the Church. 3. And consequently the visibility of the Church is that which belongs to the body of true believers.

4. The Church must retain its essential attributes in every stage and state of its existence, in prosperity and in adversity. It is, however, undeniable, that the Church has existed in a state of dispersion. There have been periods when the whole external organization lapsed into idolatry or heresy. This was the case when there were but seven thousand in all Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, when at the time of the advent the whole Jewish Church, as an organized body, rejected Christ, and the New Testament Church was not yet founded; and to a great extent, also, during the ascendency of Arianism. We must either admit that the Church perished during these periods, or that it was continued in the scattered, unorganized believers. If the latter, its visibility is not that of an external society, but such as belongs to the true body of Christ, whose members are known by the fruits of the Spirit manifested in their lives.

5. The great argument however, on this subject, is the utter incongruity between what the Bible teaches concerning the Church, and the Romish doctrine that the Church is visible as an external organization. If that is so, then such organization is the Church; then, as the Church is holy, the body and bride of Christ, the temple and family of God, all the members of the organization are holy, members of Christ's body, and partakers of his life. Then, too, as Christ has promised to guide his Church into the knowledge of the truth, that external organization can never err as to any essential doctrine. Then, also, as we are commanded to obey the Church, if we refuse submission to this external body, we are to be regarded as heathen men and publicans. Then, moreover, as Christ saves all the members of his body, and none other, he saves all included in this external organization, and consigns to eternal death all out of it. And then, finally, ministers admit to heaven all whom they receive into this society, and cast into hell all whom they reject from it. These are not only the logical, but the avowed and admitted conclusions of the principle in question. It becomes those who call themselves Protestants, to look these

consequences in the face, before they join the Papists and Puseyites in ridiculing the idea of a Church composed exclusively of believers, and insist that the body to which the attributes and promises of the Church belong, is the visible organization of professing Christians. Such Protestants may live to see men walking about with the keys of heaven at their girdle, armed with a power before which the bravest may well tremble.

The scriptural and Protestant doctrine of the visibility of the Church is, therefore, a corollary of the true doctrine of its nature. If the Church is a company of believers, its visibility is that which belongs to believers. They are visible as men; as holy men; as men separated from the world, as a peculiar people, by the indwelling of the Spirit of God; as the soul and sustaining element of all those external organizations, consisting of professors of the true religion, united for the worship of Christ, the maintenance of the truth, and mutual watch and care.

The objections which Bellarmin, Bossuet, Palmer, and writers generally of the Romish and Ritual class, urge against this doctrine, are either founded on misconception, or resolve themselves into objections against the scriptural view of the nature of the Church as "the company of believers." Thus, in the first place, it is objected that in the Scriptures and in all ecclesiastical history, the Church is spoken of and addressed as a visible society of professing Christians. The churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, and Rome, were all such societies; and the whole body of such professors constituted THE CHURCH. History traces the origin, the extension, the trials, and the triumphs of that outward community. It is vain, therefore, to deny that body to be the Church, which the Bible and all Christendom unite in so designating. But was not the ancient Hebrew commonwealth called Israel, Jerusalem, Zion? Is not its history, as a visible society, recorded from Abraham to the destruction of Jerusalem? And yet does not Paul say expressly, that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; that the external Israel is not the true Israel? In this objection the real point at issue is overlooked. The question is not, whether a man who professes to be a Christian, may properly be so addressed and so treated, but whether profession makes a man a true Christian. The question is not, whether a society of professing Christians may properly be called a Church, and be so regarded, but whether their being such a society constitutes them a competent part of the body of Christ. The whole question is, What is the subject of the attributes and prerogatives of the body of Christ? Is it the external body of professors, or the company of believers? If calling a man a Christian does not imply that he has the character and the inheritance of the disciples of Christ; if calling the Jewish commonwealth Israel did not imply that they were the true Israel, then calling the pro-

fessors of the true religion the Church, does not imply that they are the body of Christ. When the designation given to any man or body of men, involves nothing more than what is external or official, its application implies they are what they are called. To call a man an Englishman, is to recognize him as such. To address any one as emperor, king, or president, is to admit his claim to such title. But when the designation is expressive of some inward quality, and a state of mind, its application does not imply its actual possession, but simply that it is claimed. To call men saints, believers, the children of God, or a Church, supposes them to be true believers, or the true Church, only on the assumption that "no internal virtue" is necessary to union with the Church, or to make a man a believer and a child of God.

Scriptural and common usage, therefore, is perfectly consistent with the Protestant doctrine. That doctrine admits the propriety of calling any man a Christian who professes to be a worshipper of Christ, and of designating any company of such men a church. It only denies that he is a real Christian who is one only in name; or that that is a true Church, which is such only in profession. An external society, therefore, may properly be called a Church, without implying that the visibility of the true Church consists in outward organization.

2. It is objected that the possession of officers, of laws, of terms of communion, necessarily supposes the Church to have the visibility of an external society. How can a man be received into the Church, or excommunicated from it, if the Church is not an outward organization? Did the fact that the Hebrews had officers and laws, a temple, a ritual, terms of admission and exclusion, make the external Israel the true Israel, or prove that the visibility of the latter was that of a state or commonwealth? Protestants admit that true believers form themselves into a visible society, with officers, laws, and terms of communion—but they deny that such society is the true Church, any further than it consists of true believers. Everything comes back to the question, What is the Church? True believers constitute the true Church; professed believers constitute the outward Church. These two things are not to be confounded. The external body is not, as such, the body of Christ. Neither are they to be separated as two Churches; the one true and the other false, the one real and the other nominal. They differ as the sincere and insincere differ in any community, or as the Israel *κατα πνευμα* differ from the Israel *κατα σαρκα*. A man could be admitted to the outward Israel without being received into the number of God's true people, and he could be excluded from the former without being cut off from the latter. The true Israel was not the commonwealth, as such, and the outward organization, with its laws and officers, though

intimately related with the spiritual body as the true Church, did not constitute it. The question, how far the outward Church is the true Church, is easily answered. Just so far as it is what it professes to be, and no further. So far as it is a company of faithful men, animated and controlled by the Holy Spirit, it is a true Church, a constituent member of the body of Christ. If it be asked further, how we are to know whether a given society is to be regarded as a Church; we answer, precisely as we know whether a given individual is to be regarded as a Christian, *i. e.* by their profession and conduct. As the Protestant doctrine, that true believers constitute the body of Christ, is perfectly consistent with the existence amongst them and others outwardly united with them, of officers and laws, no argument can be drawn from the existence of such outward institutions to prove that the Church is essentially an external organization.

Bossuet presents this objection in the light of a contradiction. He says, "Protestants insist that the Church consists exclusively of believers, and is therefore an invisible body. But when asked for the signs of a Church, they say, the word and sacraments: thus making it an external society with ordinances, a ministry, and public service. If so, how can it consist exclusively of the pious? And where was there any such society, answering to the Protestant definition, before the Reformation?"* This objection rests upon the misconception which Ritualists do not appear able to rid themselves of. When Protestants say the Church is invisible, they only mean that an inward and consequently invisible state of mind is the condition of membership, and not that those who have this internal qualification are invisible, or that they cannot be so known as to enable us to discharge the duties which we owe them. When asked, what makes a man a Christian? we say, true faith. When asked whom must we regard and treat as Christians? we answer, those who make a credible profession of their faith. Is there any contradiction in this? Is there any force in the objection, that if faith is an inward quality, it cannot be proved by outward evidence? Thus, when Protestants are asked, what is the true Church? they answer, the company of believers. When asked what associations are to be regarded and treated as churches? they answer, those in which the gospel is preached. When asked further, where was the Church before the Reformation? they answer, just where it was in the days of Elias, when it consisted of a few thousand scattered believers.†

* Bossuet's Variations, Book xv. § 20, *et seqq.*

† The question which Romanists so confidently ask, Where was your Church before Luther? is well answered in the homely retort, Where was your face this morning before it was washed?

3. A third objection is very much of the same kind as the preceding. If the Church consists exclusively of believers, it is invisible. We are, however, required to obey the Church, to hear the Church, &c. But how can we hear and obey an invisible body? To this the answer is, the Church is no more invisible than believers are. We are commanded to love the brethren; to do good to all men, especially to the household of faith. As faith, however, is invisible, it may be asked, in the spirit of this objection, how can we tell who are believers? Christ says, by their fruits. There is no real difficulty in this matter. If we have a real heart for it, we shall be able to obey the command to love the brethren, though we cannot read the heart; and if disposed to hear the Church, we shall be able to recognize her voice. Because the true Church is always visible, and, therefore, can be obeyed, Ritualists infer that the visible Church is the true Church, though, as Dr. Jackson says, the two propositions differ as much as "to withstand a man" differs from "standing with a man."

4. Much the most plausible argument of Romanists is derived from the analogy of the old dispensation. That the Church is a visible society, consisting of the professors of the true religion, as distinguished from the body of true believers, known only to God, is plain, they say, because under the old dispensation it was such a society, embracing all the descendants of Abraham who professed the true religion, and received the sign of circumcision. To this external society were given the oracles of God, the covenants, the promises, the means of grace. Out of its pale there was no salvation. Union with it was the necessary condition of acceptance with God. This was a divine institution. It was a visible Church, consisting of professors, and not exclusively of believers. If such a society existed then by divine appointment, what has become of it? Has it ceased to exist? Has removing its restriction to one people destroyed its nature? Does lopping certain branches from the tree destroy the tree itself? Far from it. The Church exists as an external society now as it did then; what once belonged to the commonwealth of Israel, now belongs to the visible Church. As union with the commonwealth of Israel was necessary to salvation then, so union with the visible Church is necessary to salvation now. And as subjection to the priesthood, and especially to the high-priest, was necessary to union with Israel then, so submission to the regular ministry, and especially to the Pope, is necessary to union with the Church now. Such is the favourite argument of Romanists; and such, (striking out illogically the last clause, which requires subjection to prelates, or the Pope,) we are sorry to say is the argument of some Protestants, and even of some Presbyterians.

The fallacy of the whole argument lies in its false assumption, that

the external Israel was the true Church. It was not the body of Christ; it was not pervaded by his Spirit. Membership in it did not constitute membership in the body of Christ. The rejection or destruction of the external Israel was not the destruction of the Church. The apostasy of the former was not the apostasy of the latter. The attributes, promises, and prerogatives of the one, were not those of the other. In short, they were not the same, and, therefore, that the visibility of the one was that of an external organization, is no proof that the visibility of the Church is that of an external society. All this is included, not only in the express declaration of the Apostle, that the external Israel was not the true Israel, but is involved in his whole argument. It was, indeed, the main point of discussion between himself and the Jews. The great question was, is a man made a member of the true Israel, and a partaker of the promise, by circumcision and subjection, or by faith in Christ? If the former, then the Jews were right, and Paul was wrong as to the whole issue. But if the latter, then Paul was right and the Jews wrong. And this is the precise question between us and Romanists, and Anglicans. If the external Israel was the true Israel, then Romanists are right and Protestants are wrong as to the method of salvation. Besides, if we admit that the external Israel was the true Church, then we must admit that the true Church apostatized; for it is undeniable that the whole external Israel, as an organized body, did repeatedly, and for long periods, lapse into idolatry. Nay more, we must admit that the true Church rejected and crucified Christ; for he was rejected by the external Israel, by the Sanhedrim, by the priesthood, by the elders, and by the people. All this is in direct opposition to the Scriptures, and would involve a breach of promise on the part of God. Paul avoids this fatal conclusion by denying that the external Church is, as such, the true Church, or that the promises made to the latter were made to the former.

It is to be remembered that there were two covenants made with Abraham. By the one, his natural descendants through Isaac were constituted a commonwealth, an external, visible community. By the other, his spiritual descendants were constituted a Church. The parties to the former covenant were God and the nation; to the other, God and his true people. The promises of the national covenant were national blessings; the promises of the spiritual covenant, (*i. e.* of the covenant of grace,) were spiritual blessings, reconciliation, holiness, and eternal life. The conditions of the one covenant were circumcision and obedience to the law; the condition of the latter was, is, and ever has been, faith in the Messiah as the seed of the woman, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. There cannot be a greater mistake

than to confound the national covenant with the covenant of grace, and the commonwealth founded on the one with the Church founded on the other.

When Christ came "the commonwealth" was abolished, and there was nothing put in its place. The Church remained. There was no external covenant, nor promises of external blessings, on condition of external rites and subjection. There was a spiritual society with spiritual promises, on the condition of faith in Christ. In no part of the New Testament is any other condition of membership in the Church prescribed than that contained in the answer of Philip to the eunuch who desired baptism: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."—Acts viii. 37. The Church, therefore, is, in its essential nature, a company of believers, and not an external society, requiring merely external profession as the condition of membership. While this is true and vitally important, it is no less true that believers make themselves visible by the profession of the truth, by holiness of life, by separation from the world as a peculiar people, and by organizing themselves for the worship of Christ, and for mutual watch and care. The question, when any such organization is to be regarded as a portion of the true Church, is one to which the Protestant answer has already been given in a few words, but its fuller discussion must be reserved to some other occasion.

CHAPTER IV.

PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH. [*]

THE Church is perpetual. Of this there is, among Christians, neither doubt nor dispute. But as to what is meant both by the subject and predicate of this proposition, there exist radically different views. By the Church, Romanists understand the external visible society united in the profession of the same faith, by communion in the sacraments, and subjection to bishops having succession, especially to the Roman Pontiff. The perpetuity of the Church, therefore, must on their theory include the continued existence of an organized society, professing the true faith; the continued legitimate administration of the sacraments; and the uninterrupted succession of prelates and popes.

[* Article entitled "*The Church—Its Perpetuity*," *Princeton Review*, 1856, p. 689.]

Anglicans * understand by the Church an external society professing the true faith, united in the communion of the same sacraments, and in subjection to bishops canonically ordained. Perpetuity with them, therefore, must include perpetual adherence to the truth, the due administration of the sacraments, and the uninterrupted succession of bishops.

Protestants hold that the true Church is the body of true believers; and that the empirical or visible Church is the body of those who profess the true religion, together with their children. All therefore that the perpetuity of the Church, according to the Protestant theory, involves, is the continued existence on earth of sincere believers who profess the true religion.

It is obvious that everything depends on the definition of the Church. If you determine the nature of the subject, you determine the nature of its attributes. If the Romish or Anglican definition of the Church be correct, then their view of all its attributes, its visibility, perpetuity, holiness, and unity, must also be correct. And, on the other hand, if the Protestant definition of the Church be accepted, so must also the Protestant view of its attributes. It is also obvious that the consideration of any one of these points involves all the others. The perpetuity of the Church, for example, brings up the question, whether external organization is necessary to its existence; whether the Church may depart from the faith; whether the prelatical office is necessary, and whether an uninterrupted succession of ordination is essential to the ministry; how far the sacraments are necessary to the being of the Church; whether Peter was the head of the College of the Apostles; whether the bishop of Rome is his successor in that office; and whether submission to the Roman Pontiff is essential to the unity, and, of course, to the existence of the Church. All these points are involved in the Romish theory on this subject; and all, except the last two, in the Anglican doctrine. It would be impossible to go over all this ground in less compass than that of a volume. On each of these topics, ponderous tomes have been written. We propose simply to present, in a series of propositions, a brief outline of the Protestant answer to the question, In what sense is the Church perpetual?

The predictions of the Old Testament, and the promises of the New, it is universally conceded, secure the existence of the Church on earth until the second advent of Christ. Our Lord said to his disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." He promised that the gates of hell should never prevail against his Church.

* By *Anglicans* is meant the Laudean, or Oxford party, in the Church of England.

As to the fact, therefore, that the Church is to exist on earth as long as the world lasts, there is and can be no dispute among Christians. The only question is, How are these promises to be understood?

The first proposition which Protestants maintain in answer to the above question, is, that the promise of Christ does not secure the continued existence of any particular Church as an organized body. By a particular Church is meant a body of professing Christians, united by some ecclesiastical organization, as the Church of Antioch, of Jerusalem, of England, or of Holland. The proposition is, that, from all that appears in Scripture, any such Church may apostatize from the truth, or cease to exist even nominally. This proposition is almost universally conceded. Many of the apostolic Churches have long since perished. The Churches of Antioch, of Ephesus, of Corinth, of Thessalonica, have been blotted out of existence. Romanists teach that the Eastern Churches, and those of England, Scotland, Holland, &c., have so far departed from the faith and order of the true Church, as no longer to belong to the body of Christ. Anglicans teach, that all societies which have rejected the office, or lost the regular succession of the episcopate, have ceased to be Churches. Protestants, with one voice, deny that any particular Church is either infallible, or secure from fatal apostasy. All parties therefore agree in asserting that the promise of Christ does not secure the perpetuity of any one particular Church.

The great majority of Papists do indeed make an exception in favour of the city of Rome. As the bishop of that city is regarded as the vicar of Christ, and as all other Churches are required to recognize and obey him as such on pain of exclusion from the body of Christ, so long as the Church continues on earth, that bishop must continue worthy of recognition and obedience. Any member of the body may die, but if the head perish, the whole body perishes with it.

But since there is no special promise in Scripture to the Church of Rome, it can be made an exception to the general liability to defection only on the assumption, 1. That Peter was made the head of the whole Church. 2. That the recognition of him in that character is essential to membership in the body of Christ. 3. That he was the bishop of Rome. 4. That the Popes are his legitimate successors in the bishopric of that city, and in his headship over the Church. 5. That the recognition of the supremacy of the Pope is an essential condition for all ages of the existence of the Church. Every one of these assumptions, however, is false.

The second proposition is, that the promise of Christ does not secure his Church from all error in matters of faith. The Protestant doctrine is that a particular Church, and even the whole visible Church,

may err in matters of doctrine, and yet retain their character as Churches. "The purest Churches under heaven," says the Westminster Confession, "are subject to mixture and error." By the profession of the truth, therefore, which is declared to be essential to the existence of the Church, must be understood the profession of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. This distinction between essential and non-essential doctrines is one, which, however it may be denied, is in some form admitted by all Christians. Sometimes the distinction is pressed by drawing a line between matters of faith and matters of opinion; at others, by distinguishing between truths which must be received with explicit faith, and those which may be received implicitly. In some form the distinction must be acknowledged.

What we are concerned to show is, that the existence of the Church does not depend on its absolute freedom from error. This may appear too plain a point to need proof; and yet it is one of the fundamental doctrines of Romanism, that the Church cannot err in matters of faith. That the Church may thus err, is proved, 1. Because nothing can be necessary to the existence of the Church which is not necessary to salvation. Freedom from error in matters of doctrine, is not necessary to salvation, and therefore cannot be necessary to the perpetuity of the Church.

That nothing can be necessary to the existence of the Church which is not necessary to salvation, is so nearly a self-evident proposition, that its terms cannot be understood without forcing assent. Salvation involves union with Christ; union with Christ involves union with the Church, for the Church is his body; that is, it consists of those who are united to Him. Therefore, nothing which is compatible with union with Christ, can be incompatible with union to the Church. Consequently, the Church exists so long as true believers exist. It is a contradiction, therefore, to say that anything is necessary to the being of the Church, which is not necessary to salvation.

That freedom from error in matters of faith is not necessary to salvation, is scarcely less plain. By "matters of faith" are meant those truths which God has revealed in his word, and which all who hear the gospel are bound to believe. Perfect faith supposes perfect knowledge; and such perfection cannot be necessary to salvation, because it is not necessary to piety. It is of course admitted that knowledge is essential to religion, because religion consists in the love, belief, and obedience of the truth. It is therefore conceded, that all religious error must be injurious to religion, in proportion to the importance of the truths concerned. If such errors are so grave as to present a false object of worship to the mind, or to lead men to rest on a false ground of confidence, they must be fatal. But it must be admitted that a very

limited amount of knowledge is absolutely essential to faith and love. A man may be ignorant of much that God has revealed, and yet receiving with humble confidence all he does know, and acting in obedience to what he has learned, he may be accepted of Him who judgeth according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. As religion may consist with much ignorance, so it may consist with error. There is indeed little practical difference between the two. In both cases the proper object of faith and love is absent from the mind; and when absent its place is of necessity supplied by some erroneous conception. If a man know not the true God, he will form to himself a false god. If he know not that Jesus Christ is the Lord of glory, he will conceive him to be a man or angel. If he know not the true method of salvation, he will build his hope on some wrong foundation. But if perfect knowledge is not necessary to religion, freedom from error cannot be essential. And if not essential to the individual Christian, it cannot be essential to the Church, which is only a company of Christians. The Romish and Anglican doctrine, therefore, that all error in matters of faith is destructive to the being of the Church, or that the promise of Christ secures the Church from all such error, is contrary to the nature of religion, inasmuch as it supposes freedom from error to be necessary to its existence.

This view is confirmed by daily observation. We constantly see men who give every evidence of piety, who are either ignorant or erroneous as to many matters of faith. The Bible also, in various ways, teaches the same doctrine. It distinguishes between babes in Christ, and those who are strong. It recognizes as Christians those who know nothing beyond the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. It teaches that those who hold the foundation shall be saved, (though so as by fire,) although they build on that foundation wood, hay, and stubble. It recognizes great diversity of doctrine as existing among those whom it treats as being substantially one in faith. It is not true, therefore, that a Christian cannot err in matters of faith; and if one may err, all may; and if all may, the Church may. The perpetuity of the Church consequently does not imply that it must always profess the truth, without any admixture of error.

2. The historical argument in opposition to the Romish doctrine that the Church must be free from error in matters of faith, is no less decisive.

There are two ways in which the Church may profess its faith. It may be done by its public authorized confession or creed; or it may be done by its individual members. The former is the more formal and authoritative; but the latter is no less real. The Church of any age consists of its members for that age. What the members profess, the

Church professes. The apostasy of the Church of Geneva was not the less real because the old orthodox Confessions were allowed to remain. The Churches of Germany were universally considered as sunk in Rationalism, even though the Augsburg Confession was nominally their standard of faith. The lapse of the Romish Church into infidelity and atheism in France was complete, although the Apostles' Creed continued to be professed in the Church services. If no Church could be considered as having lapsed into error, so long as its standards remain orthodox, then no Church can ever become erroneous, so long as it professes to believe the Scriptures. By the faith of a Church is properly meant the faith of its actual members; and by a Church professing error is meant that error is avowed by its members. The doctrine, therefore, that the Church cannot err in matters of faith, must mean that the mass of its members cannot thus err; for they constitute the Church, and if they err the Church errs.

There is no historical fact better established than that no external organized body has ever existed free from error. Even during the apostolical age the Churches of Jerusalem, of Corinth, and of Galatia, were infected with serious errors, and yet they were Churches. During the first three centuries, errors concerning the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the person and office of the Spirit, and the nature of man, were almost universal. From the fourth to the tenth century, no organized body can be pointed out whose members did not profess doctrines which are now almost universally pronounced to be erroneous. Since the Reformation, the Lutherans and the Reformed differ in matters of doctrine. The Church of England differs from the Greek and Latin Churches. So that it is impossible to maintain that freedom from error is essential to the perpetuity of the Church. No Church is absolutely pure in doctrine; and even if the standards of the Church should be faultless, still the real faith of its members is not. The promise of Christ, therefore, securing the perpetuity of the Church, does not secure the constant existence on earth of any body of men who are infallible in matters of faith and practice.

The third proposition is, that the perpetuity of the Church does not involve the continued existence of any visible organized body professing the true religion, and furnished with regular pastors.

At the time of the Reformation it was constantly urged against the Protestants that they were bound to obey the Church. To this they replied, that the Church to which the obedience of the faithful is due, was not the Romish, or any other external organization, for they had all departed from the faith, and taught for doctrines the commandments of men. To this, Romanists rejoined, that if that were true, the Church had perished, for no organized visible society could be pointed

out which professed the doctrines avowed by Protestants. To this again the Reformers replied, that the perpetuity of the Church, which all parties admitted, did not require the continued existence of any such society; the Church might exist, and at times had existed in scattered believers. Calvin says: "*In his cardinibus controversia nostra vertitur: primum quod ecclesiæ formam semper apparere et spectabilem esse contendunt: deinde quod formam ipsam in sede Romanæ Ecclesiæ et Præsulum suorum ordine constituant. Nos contra asserimus, et ecclesiam nulla apparente forma constare posse, nec formam externo illo splendore quem stulte admirantur, sed longe alia nota contineri; nempe pura verbi Dei prædicatione, et legitima sacramentorum administratione. Fremunt nisi ecclesia digito semper ostendatur.*" *

In support of what Calvin thus calls one of the cardinal doctrines of Protestants, that the Church may be perpetuated in scattered believers; or in other words, that the apostasy of every visible organized society from the true faith is consistent with the perpetuity of the Church, it may be argued,

1. That the definition of the Church necessarily involves that conclusion. If the true Church consists of true believers, and the visible Church of professed believers, then the true Church continues as long as true believers exist on earth; and the visible Church so long as professors of the true religion exist. It is only by denying the correctness of these definitions that the necessity of a continued visible organization can be maintained. Accordingly Romanists and Anglicans have been obliged to depart from the scriptural view of the nature of the Church, and to make external organization an essential element of its definition in order to have any ground on which to stand. They maintain that the Church is something more than a company of believers, or a collective term for a number of believers. They insist that it is a visible organization, subject to lawful pastors—something that can be pointed to with the finger. If to such an organization the promise of perpetuity was originally given, then Protestants were schismatics, and their Churches are apostate. But if their view of the nature of the Church be correct, then their view of the sense in which it is perpetual must also be correct.

2. The promises of the word of God which secure the perpetuity of the Church, require nothing more than the continued existence of professors of the true religion. Thus, when our Lord says, the gates of hell shall never prevail against his Church; if by Church he meant his

* Preface to the Institutes, p. 15. Had Calvin lived in our day he would hear with surprise zealous Protestants, and even Presbyterians, crying out against the doctrine that visible organization is not essential to the Church.

people, his promise only renders it certain that he shall always have a seed to serve him, or that there shall always be true followers and worshippers of Christ on the earth. Thus, also, the declaration of Christ, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," holds good, even though all the temples of Christians should be destroyed, their faithful pastors scattered or slain, and they forced to wander about, being destitute, afflicted and tormented, hiding in dens and caves of the earth. Nay, his presence will only be the more conspicuous in the sight of saints and angels, in sustaining the faith and patience of his people under all these trials, and in causing them to triumph through suffering, and become great through weakness. The presence of God was more illustriously displayed with the three confessors in the fiery furnace, than with Solomon in all his glory. Protestants believe with Tertullian—"*Ubi tres sunt, etiamsi laici, ibi ecclesia est.*"

The predictions in the Old Testament, which speak of an everlasting covenant which God was to form with his people, (Isa. lxi.,) and of a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, (Dan. ii. 44,) do indeed clearly establish the perpetuity of the Church, but not of an external organization. The kingdom of God consists of those who obey him; and as long as there are any who recognize Christ as their king, so long will his kingdom continue. His promise renders it certain that such subjects of the heavenly King shall never entirely fail from among men; and also that their number shall ultimately so increase, that they shall possess the whole earth. More than this these predictions do not render necessary. They do not preclude the possibility of the temporary triumph of the enemies of the Church, dispersing its members, and causing them to wander about, known only to God. Nor do they preclude the occurrence of a general apostasy, so extended as to embrace all the visible organizations calling themselves churches. Whether such an apostasy has ever actually occurred, is not now the question. All that is asserted is that these promises and predictions do not forbid its occurrence. They may all be yea and amen, though the faithful for a season be as few and as unknown, as the seven thousand who did not bow the knee unto Baal.

Further, when St. Paul says, "Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord," (1 Thess. iv. 17,) the only inference is, that there shall be Christians living on the earth when Christ comes the second time. The parable of the wheat and tares proves that until the consummation there will be true and false professors of the religion of the gospel, but it proves nothing more.

Such are the leading scriptural arguments urged by Bellarmin * and Palmer † for the Romish and Anglican view of the perpetuity of the Church. They prove what Protestants admit, but they do not prove what their opponents assert. That is, they prove that the people of God shall continue to exist on the earth until the second coming of Christ, but they do not prove the continued existence of any visible organization professing the true faith, and subject to pastors having succession. If it be granted that the word *Church*, in Scripture, is a collective term for the people of God, then the promises which secure the continued existence of a seed to serve God as long as the world lasts, do not secure the continued fidelity of the visible Church, considered as an organized body.

3. A third argument on this subject is, that there is no necessity for the continued existence of the Church as an external visible society. That is, there is no revealed purpose of God, which involves such existence as the necessary means of its accomplishment. Bellarmin's argument on this point is, "If the Church should ever be reduced to such a state as to be unknown, the salvation of those out of the Church would be impossible. For no man can be saved unless he enters the Church, but, if the Church be unknown, it cannot be entered, therefore, men cannot be saved." ‡ Mr. Palmer's argument is to the same effect. "If the Church as an organization were to fail," he says, "there would be no way to revive it, except by a direct and immediate interposition of God; which would prove the gospel to be a temporary dispensation, and all living subsequently to its failure would be deprived of its benefits."

The answer to this is that the argument rests on the unscriptural assumption, that we become united to Christ by being united to the Church as an external visible society; whereas union with Christ in the divine order precedes, and is entirely independent of union with

* De Ecclesia, cap. 13.

† Palmer on the Church, part i. ch. i. sec. 1. Mr. Palmer's chapter on this subject is one of the most illogical in all his elaborate work. Without defining his terms, he quotes promises and predictions which imply the perpetuity of the Church, and then quotes from Protestant writers of all denominations, passages to show that the continued existence of the Church is a conceded point. Every step of his argument, throughout his book, and all his important deductions, rest on the assumption that the Church, whose perpetuity is thus proved or conceded, is an external organization, consisting of those who profess the truth, without any error in matters of faith, and who are subject to pastors episcopally and canonically ordained. Everything is founded on this chapter, which quietly takes for granted the thing to be proved.

‡ De Ecclesia, lib. iii. c. 13.

any visible society. "That our union with some present visible Church," says Dr. Jackson, one of the greatest divines of the Church of England, "is a native degree or part of our union with the Holy Catholic Church, [i. e., the body of Christ;] or, that our union with some present visible church is essential to our being, or not being members of the Holy Catholic Church," is what "we utterly deny." *

That such union with the visible Church as the argument of Bellarmin supposes is not necessary to salvation is plain, because all that the Scriptures require in order to salvation, is repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism has indeed the necessity of precept, as something commanded; but even Romanists admit that where the desire for baptism exists, the mere want of the rite works no forfeiture of salvation. And they also admit the validity of lay baptism; so that even if the necessity of that ordinance were conceded, it would not involve the necessity of an external organized Church, or an uninterrupted succession of the ministry. If, therefore, the whole visible organized Church should apostatize or be dispersed by persecution, the door of heaven would be as wide open as ever. Wherever Christ is known, men may obey and love him, without the intervention of a priest.

Mr. Palmer's idea, that if the Church as a society should fail, it could only be revived by a new revelation or intervention of God, rests on the assumption that the Church is a corporation with supernatural prerogatives and powers, which if once dissolved perishes entirely. The Church however is only the people of God; if they should bo scattered even for years, as soon as they assemble for the worship of God, the administration of the Sacraments, and the exercise of discipline, the Church as a society is there, as good as ever; and a thousand times better than the fossil Churches which have preserved their organic continuity only by being petrified. Should the succession of the ministry fail, no harm is done. The validity of the ministry does not depend on such succession. It is not the prerogative of prelates to make ministers. A minister is made by the inward call of the Spirit. The whole office of the Church in the matter is to sit in judgment on that call, and, if satisfied, to authenticate it. The failure of the succession, therefore, works no failure in the stream of life, as the Spirit is not confined to the channel of the ministry. The apostasy or dispersion of the whole organized Church, is not inconsistent with its continued existence, or incompatible with the accomplishment of all the revealed purposes of God. Men may still be saved, and the ministry and sacraments be perpetuated in all their efficiency and power.

* Treatise on the Church, p. 143.

Again, Bellarmin presents the following dilemma. "Either," he says, "those secret men who constitute the invisible Church, continue to profess the true religion or they do not. If they do, the Church continues visible and conspicuously so, in them. If they do not confess the truth, then the Church in every sense fails, for without confession there is no salvation."

This is an illustration of the impossibility of errorists avoiding lapsing into the truth. Here is one of the acutest polemics Rome ever produced, surrendering the whole matter in debate. These secret confessors are not a society of faithful men, subject to lawful pastors and to the Pope. It is precisely what Romanists deny, and Protestants affirm, that the Church may be perpetuated in scattered believers, each in his own narrow sphere confessing the truth, and this is here conceded. This is what Protestants affirm of the Church before the Reformation. Every conspicuous organization had lapsed into idolatry, and yet the Church was continued in thousands of God's chosen ones who never bowed the knee to Baal.

4. A fourth argument on this subject is derived from the predictions of general apostasy contained in the Scriptures. Our Lord foretold that false Christs should come and deceive many. He warned his disciples that they should be persecuted and hated of all nations; that iniquity should abound, and the love of many wax cold; that false prophets should arise and show signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. He intimated that faith should hardly be found when he came again; that it will be then as it was in the days of Noah, or in the time of Lot, only a few here and there would be found faithful. The apostles also are frequent and explicit in their declarations that a general apostasy was to occur. The Spirit, says Paul, speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith. 1 Tim. iv. 1. In the last days, perilous times were to come (2 Tim. iii. 4); times in which men would not endure sound doctrine, (iv. 3.). The day of Christ, he says, was not to come before the rise of the man of sin, whose coming was to be attended by the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, when men (the professing Church generally) should be given up to believe a lie. Peter foretold that in the last times there should be false prophets and scorners, who would bring in damnable heresies. 2 Pet. ii. 1; iii. 3. And the apostle Jude reminds his readers of the words which were spoken by the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, how they told you that in the last time there should be mockers, walking after their own lusts. Jude 18.

Although these passages do not go the full length of the proposition above stated, or render it necessary to asume that no organized body

was to exist during this apostasy, which professed the true faith, yet they are entirely inconsistent with the Romish and Anglican theory. That theory is that the catholic Church, or the great body of professing Christians united under lawful pastors, can never err in matters of faith. Whereas these passages foretell an apostasy from the truth so general, that true believers are to be few and scattered, driven into the wilderness, and in a great measure unknown to men.

5. The history of the Church before the advent of Christ, proves that its perpetuity does not involve the continued existence of any organization professing the true religion. The Church has existed from the beginning. We know, however, that there was, before the flood, an apostasy so general that Noah and his family were the only believers on the face of the earth. Soon after the flood the defection from the truth again became so far universal, that no organized body of the worshippers of God can be pointed out. Abraham was, therefore, called to be the head of a new organization. His descendants, to whom pertained the law, the covenants, and the promises, constituted the visible Church; nevertheless they often and for long periods lapsed into idolatry. All public celebration of the worship of the true God was intermitted; altars to Baal were erected in every part of the land; the true children of God were scattered and unknown, so that under Ahab, the prophet complained: "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars, and I am left alone." Where was then the visible Church? Where was then any organized society professing the true religion? The seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, were indeed *the* Church, but they were not an organized body. They were unknown even to Elijah.

To this argument Bellarmin answers, that the Jewish Church was not catholic in the sense in which the Christian Church now is, because good men existed outside the pale of the Jewish Church: and, therefore, although all within the Jewish communion had apostatized, it would not follow that the whole Church had failed. This is very true on the Protestant theory of the Church, but not on his. Protestants hold that the Church consists of true believers, and therefore so long as such believers exist, the Church exists. But according to Romanists the Church is a corporation, an external, visible, organized society. It is very clear that no such society existed except among the Jews, and therefore if the Jewish Church lapsed into idolatry, there was no Church on earth to answer to the Romish theory.

Another answer to the above argument is, that the complaint of Elijah had reference only to the kingdom of Israel; that although the defection there had been universal, the true Church as an organized body was continued in the kingdom of Judah. To this it may be

replied, that the prophet probably intended to include both kingdoms, because he complains of digging down the altars of God; but there were no altars of God except at Jerusalem. Besides, the prophet could hardly have felt so entirely alone, and wished for death, if the worship of God were then celebrated at Jerusalem. What, however, is more to the purpose is, that it is plain that the apostle in Rom. xi. 2, evidently uses the word Israel not in its restricted sense for the ten tribes, but for the whole theocratical people. He appeals to the words of the prophet for the very purpose of proving that the rejection of the Jews as a body involved no failure of the divine promise. As in the days of Elijah there were an unknown few who, in the midst of general apostasy, did not bow to Baal; so notwithstanding the general defection and rejection of the Jews at the time of Christ, there was still a remnant according to the election of grace. Paul's design was to teach that the Church might be perpetuated, and in fact had been perpetuated in scattered unknown believers, although the visible Church as a society entirely apostatized.

Admitting, however, that the complaint of Elijah had exclusive reference to the kingdom of Israel, it still proves all that the argument demands. It proves that the Church as visible in that kingdom had apostatized and was continued in the seven thousand. This proves two points: first, that scattered believers, although members of no external society, may be members of the Church; and second, that the Church may be continued in such unknown believers. This is precisely what Romanists and Anglicans deny, and what Protestants affirm; and what Calvin declares to be one of the cardinal or turning points in our controversy with Rome.

Besides, whatever may have been the condition of the Church in Jerusalem at the period to which the prophet referred, it is certain that idolatry did at other times prevail contemporaneously in both kingdoms; and that after the captivity of the ten tribes wicked kings set up idols even in the temple. Thus we read in 2 Chron. xxxiii. 4, 5, that Manasseh built altars in the house of the Lord, whereof the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. And he built altars in the two courts of the house of the Lord... And he set up a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God... made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err and to do worse than the heathen. It is plain that the public worship of God, all the institutions of the Jewish Church, all sacrifices and service of the temple were abolished under this and other wicked princes. And when at last the patience of God was wearied out, Jerusalem itself was taken, the temple was destroyed, and the people carried away. During the seventy years of the captivity the visible Church as an organized body, with its

priests and sacrifices, ceased to exist. It was continued only in the dispersed worshippers of the true God. Subsequently to the return of the people and the restoration of the temple, under the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes the public worship of God was again suppressed. Idols were erected in the temple, and altars dedicated to false gods were erected in every part of the land. It must be remembered that under the old dispensation the visible Church had, as it were, a local habitation. It was so connected with Jerusalem and the temple, that when those sacred places were in possession of idolaters, the Church was, for the time being, disorganized. No sacrifice could be offered, and all the functions of the priesthood were suspended.

There is another consideration which shows that the perpetuity of the Church does not depend on the regular succession of a visible society, and especially on the regular succession of the ministry, as Romanists and Anglicans assert. By the law of Moses it was expressly ordered that the office of High Priest should be confined to the family of Aaron, and descend in that family by regular descent. Even before the captivity, however, the priesthood was changed from one branch of that family to another, descending first in the line of Eleazar, (Num. iii. 32. Deut. x. 6;) from Eli to Solomon in that of Ithamar; then returning to that of Eleazar, (1 Sam. ii. 35. 1 Kings ii. 35.) From the latter passage it appears that Solomon displaced Abiathar and appointed Zadok. Under the Maccabees the office was given to the hero Jonathan, of the priestly family of Joiarib, (1 Macc. xiv. 35, 41;) after his death it was transferred to his brother Simon; and under Herod the office was sold to the highest bidder, or given at the discretion of the king. (Josh. Antiq. xx. 10.) Caiaphas was made High Priest by Valerius Gratus, the Procurator of Judea, and soon after the death of Christ he was displaced by the Proconsul Vitellius. (Joseph. xviii. 4, 3.) If then, notwithstanding the express injunction of the law, the priesthood was thus changed, men being introduced into the office and displaced from it by the ruling powers without legitimate authority, and still the office continued, and the actual incumbent was recognized as high priest even by Christ and his apostles, it cannot be supposed that the existence of the Church is suspended on the regular succession of the ministry under the New Testament, where there is no express law prescribing the mode of descent. The Old Testament history, therefore, distinctly proves that the perpetuity of the Church involves neither the perpetual existence of an organized body professing the true religion, nor the regular transmission of the ministerial office. In other words, the apostolical succession in the Church or in the ministry, which is the great Diana of the Ephesians, is a mere figment.

Another illustration on this subject may be derived from the state of

the Church during the time of Christ. The Jews were then divided into three sects, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. Of these the Pharisees were the most correct in doctrine, and yet they made the word of God of no effect by their traditions, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. They asserted the doctrine of justification by works in its grossest form; they attributed saving efficacy to external rites; and they were great persecutors of Christ. The people in their organized capacity, through their official organs, the priesthood and the Sanhedrim, rejected and crucified the Lord of glory. The Christian Church, as distinguished from the Jewish, was not organized until after the resurrection of our Lord. Where then, during the period referred to, was there any organized body which professed the true religion? The Protestant theory provides for this case, the Romish theory does not. The one theory is consistent with notorious historical facts; the other theory is inconsistent with them.

To all this, however, Bellarmin and others object that the privileges of the Christian Church are so much greater than those of the Jewish, that we cannot infer from the fact that the latter apostatized that the former may depart from the faith. To this we answer that the promises of God are the only foundation of the security of the Church. The promises addressed to the Jewish Church were as explicit and as comprehensive as those addressed to the Christian Church. If those promises were consistent with the apostasy of the whole organized body of the Jews, they must be consistent with a similar apostasy on the part of Christians. God promised to Abraham to be a God to him and to his seed after him; that though a woman might forsake her sucking child, he would never forsake Zion. But he did forsake Zion as an organized community; he did permit the seed of Abraham as a body to lapse into idolatry, to reject and crucify their Messiah; he permitted Jerusalem to be destroyed, and the people to whom were given the covenants, the law, and the promises, to be scattered to the ends of the earth. These promises, therefore, as Paul argues, were not intended to guaranty the continued existence of Israel as a society faithful to the truth, but simply the continued existence of true believers. As the Jews argued that the promises of God secured the continued fidelity of the external Israel; so Bellarmin and Mr. Palmer, (Rome and Oxford,) argue that his promises secure the continued fidelity of the visible Church. And as Paul teaches that the rejection of the external Israel was consistent with the fidelity of God, because the true Israel, hidden in the external body, continued faithful; so Protestants teach that the apostasy of the whole external organized Church is consistent with the promises of God, provided a remnant, however small and however scattered, adheres to the truth.

The argument from the history of the Church under the old dispensation is therefore legitimate and scriptural. Nothing is promised to the Church now, that was not promised to the Church then. Whatever happened to the one, may happen to the other.

6. The history of the Church since the advent of Christ is no less conclusive against the Romish theory. It is not necessary to assert that the whole visible Church has at any time been so far apostate, that no organized body existed professing the true faith. All that is requisite is to prove that the Church, in the sense in which Romanists and Anglicans understand the term, has at times denied the faith. By the Church they mean the multitude of professed Christians subject to Prelates or to the Pope. This body has apostatized. There have been times in which the Church has officially and by its appropriate and acknowledged organs, (as understood by Ritualists,) professed doctrines universally admitted to be heretical. Romanists and Anglicans say that this Church is represented by the chief pastors or bishops, and that the decisions of these bishops, either assembled in council, or each acting for himself, are the decisions of the Church, to which all the faithful are bound to submit. The decision of the three hundred and eighty bishops assembled at Nice, in favour of the proper divinity of the Lord Jesus, is considered as the decision of the whole Church, notwithstanding the fewness of their number, and the fact that they were not delegates or representatives, and the further fact, that they were almost entirely from the West, because that decision was ratified by the silent acquiescence of the majority of the absent bishops. The fact that a great many of the Eastern bishops dissented from that decision and sided with Arius, is not allowed to invalidate the authority of the council. By parity of reasoning, the decisions of the contemporaneous councils, that of Seleucia in the East, and of Ariminum in the West, were the decisions of the Church. Those councils together comprised eight hundred bishops; they were convened by the Emperor, their decisions were ratified by the Pope or bishop of Rome, and by the vast majority of the bishops of Christendom. Yet the decisions of these councils were heretical. They denied the proper Divinity of our Lord.

It cannot be pretended that the acquiescence in these decisions was less general than that accorded to those of the orthodox council of Nice. The reverse was notoriously the fact. Jerome in his Dialogue "Contra Luciferianos," says: "*Ingemuit orbis terrarum, et se Arianum miratus est.*" In his comment on Psalm cxxxiii.—"*Ecclesia non in parietibus consistit, sed in dogmatum veritate; ecclesia, ibi est, ubi fides vera est. Ceterum ante annos quindecim aut viginti parietes omnes ecclesiarum hæretici possidebant; eccclesia autem vera illic erat, ubi fides vera erat.*" Athanasius himself asks: "*Quæ nunc ecclesia libere*

Christum adorat? . . . . . Nam si alicubi sunt pii et Christi studiosi (sunt autem ubique tales permulti) illi itidem, ut magnus ille propheta Elias, absconduntur, et in speluncas et cavernas terræ sese abstrudunt, aut in solitudine aberrantes commorantur." Lib. ad solitar. vitam agentes. Vincentius Lirinensis says: "*Arianorum venenum non jam portiunculam quandam, sed pene orbem totum contaminaverat; adeo fere cunctis Latini sermonis episcopis partim vi partim fraude deceptis caligo quædam offunderetur." Adv. hæres. novationes.* Thus according to Jerome the heretics were in possession of all church edifices; according to Athanasius the worshippers of Christ were hidden, or wandered about in solitude; and according to Vincent, the poison of Arianism infected the world. "After the defection of Liberius," says Dr. Jackson, "the whole Roman Empire was overspread with Arianism." If therefore the Church was orthodox under Constantine, it was heretical under Constantius. It professed Arianism under the latter, more generally than it had professed the truth under the former. For the bishops were "forty to one against Athanasius."

It will not avail to say that these bishops were deceived or intimidated. First, because the point is not why they apostatized, but that they did apostatize. This, the Romish and Anglican theory teaches, the representatives of the Church cannot do, without the Church perishing and the promise of God failing. And secondly, because the same objection might be made to the validity of the decisions of the council of Nice. Many bishops feigned agreement with those decisions; many signed them from fear of banishment; many because they thought they could be interpreted in a sense which suited their views. If these considerations do not invalidate the authority of the orthodox councils, they cannot be urged against the authority of those which were heterodox. Every argument which proves that the visible Church was Trinitarian at one time, proves that it was Arian at another time; and therefore the Church in the Romish and Anglican sense of that term, may apostatize.

So undeniable is the fact of the general prevalence of Arianism, that Romanists and Anglicans are forced to abandon their fundamental principles, in their attempts to elude the argument from this source. Bellarmin says, the Church was conspicuous in that time of defection in Hilary, Athanasius, Vincent, and others.* And Mr. Palmer says the truth was preserved even under Arian bishops.† Here they are on Protestant ground. We teach that the Church is where the truth is; that the Church may be continued in scattered individuals. They teach that the Church, as an organized body, the great multitude of

* De Ecclesia, lib. iii. cap. 16. † Palmer on the Church, vol. ii. p. 187.

professors under prelates, must always profess the truth. The facts are against them, and therefore their doctrine must be false.

7. The only other argument in favour of the position that the external Church may apostatize, is the concession of opponents. So far as the Anglican or Oxford party of the Church of England are concerned, they are estopped by the authority of their own Church and by the facts of her history.

Before the Reformation, that Church, in common with all the recognized Churches of the West, and the great body also of the Eastern Churches, held the doctrines of transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, subjective justification, the priestly character of the ministry, the invocation of saints, the worship of images, extreme unction and purgatory. These doctrines the English Church rejected, pronouncing the mass idolatrous, and the other errors heretical. According to her own official declaration, therefore, the whole Church embraced in the Oxford definition of the term, had apostatized from the faith, and become idolatrous. To say, with the Anglican party, that the points of difference between Rome and England are matters of opinion, and not matters of faith, is absurd. Because both parties declare them to be matters of faith, and because they fall under the definition of matters of faith, as given by the Anglicans themselves. Any doctrine which the Church at any time has pronounced to be part of the revelation of God, they say is a matter of faith. But the doctrines above mentioned were all for centuries part of the faith of the whole catholic Church, and therefore cannot be referred to matters of opinion. It is, therefore, impossible that the Church of England can deny the proposition that the catholic Church, as a visible organization, may apostatize. All the great divines of England, consequently, teach that the Church may be perpetuated in scattered believers.

The concessions of Romanists on this point are not less decisive. They teach that when Antichrist shall come, all public worship of God shall be interdicted; all Christian temples shall be occupied by heretics and idolators, the faithful be dispersed and hidden from the sight of men in caves and dens of the earth. This is precisely what Protestants say happened before the Reformation. The pure worship of God was everywhere forbidden; idolatrous services were universally introduced; the true children of God persecuted and driven into the mountains or caves; false doctrine was everywhere professed, and the confession of the truth was everywhere interdicted. Both parties agree as to what are the consequences of the coming of the man of sin. The only difference is that Protestants say he has come already, and Romanists say his coming is still future. But if the promise of Christ that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his Church, consists with this general

apostasy in the future, it may consist with it in the past. If the Church hereafter is to be hidden from view and continued in scattered believers, it may have been thus continued in times past. Romanists and Anglicans spurn with contempt the idea that the Lollards were the true Church in England, and yet they admit that when Antichrist shall come, the faithful will be reduced to the same, or even to a worse relative position. That is, they admit the external visible Church may become utterly apostate. Thus Bellarmin says: "*Certum est, Antichristi persecutionem fore gravissimam et notissimam ita ut cessant omnes publicæ religionis ceremoniæ et sacrificia. . . . Antichristus interdicturus est omnem divinum cultum, qui in ecclesiis Christianorum exercetur.*" * Stapleton says: "*Pelli sane poterit in desertum ecclesia regnante Antichristo, et illo momento temporis in deserto, id est, in locis abditis, in speluncis, in latibulis, quo sancti se recipient, non incommode quæretur ecclesia.*" † During the reign of Antichrist, according to the notes to the Romish version of the New Testament, 2 Thess. ii. "The external state of the Romish Church, and the public intercourse of the faithful with it, may cease; yet the due honour and obedience towards the Romish see, and the communion of heart with it, and the secret practice of that communion, and the open confession thereof, if the occasion require, shall not cease." Again, in verse 4, it is said: "The great Antichrist, who must come towards the world's end, shall abolish all other religions, true and false; and put down the blessed sacrament of the altar, wherein consisteth principally the worship of the true God, and also all idols of the Gentiles." "The oblation of Christ's blood," it is said, "is to be abolished among all the nations and Churches in the world."

These passages admit that as great an apostasy as Protestants have ever asserted has occurred. The public exercise and profession of the true faith is everywhere to cease; idolatry, or the worship of Antichrist, is to be set up in every Church in the world; the only communion of the faithful is to be in the heart and in secret; believers are to be scattered and hidden from the sight of men. Romanists, therefore, although the admission is perfectly suicidal, are constrained to admit that the perpetuity of the Church does not involve the continuance of an external visible society, professing the true faith, and subject to lawful pastors. They give up, so far as the principle is concerned, all their objections to the Protestant doctrine, that the true Church was perpetuated during the Romish apostasy, in scattered believers and witnesses of the truth.

8. The last proposition to be sustained, in vindicating the Protestant

* Rom. Pontiff. lib. iii. c. 7. † Princip. Doctrin. cap. 2.

doctrine, is included in what has already been said. The Church is perpetual; but as its perpetuity does not secure the continued existence or fidelity of any particular Church; not the preservation of the Church catholic from all error in matters of faith; nor even the preservation of the whole visible Church as an organized body, from apostasy—the only sense in which the Church is necessarily perpetual, is in the continued existence of those who profess the true faith, or the essential doctrines of the Scriptures.

The perpetuity of the Church in this sense is secured, 1. By the promises made to Christ, that he should see of the travail of his soul, (Isa. liii.;) that he should have a seed to serve him as long as sun or moon endured, (Ps. lxxii.;) that his kingdom was to be an everlasting kingdom, as foretold by all the prophets. 2. By the promises made by Christ, that the gates of hell should never prevail against his Church; that he would be with his people to the end of the world; that he would send them his Spirit to abide with them for ever. 3. By the nature of the mediatorial office, Christ is the perpetual teacher, priest, and ruler of his people. He continues to exercise the functions of these several offices in behalf of his Church on earth; and therefore the Church cannot fail so long as Christ lives: "If I live," he says, "ye shall live also." 4. The testimony of history is no less decisive. It is true, it is not the province of history to preserve a record of the faith and knowledge of all the individuals of our race. The best men are often those of whom history makes no mention. And therefore though there were whole centuries during which we could point to no witnesses of the truth, it would be most unreasonable to infer that none such existed. The perpetuity of the Church is more a matter of faith, than a matter of sight; and yet the evidence is abundant that pious men, the children of God, and the worshippers of Christ, have existed in all ages of the world. There is not a period in the whole history of the world, and especially of the world since the advent of the Son of God, which does not in its literature retain the impress of devout minds. The hymns and prayers of the Church in themselves afford abundant evidence of its continued vitality. The history of the Church of Rome has been in great measure a history of the persecution of those who denied her errors, and protested against her authority; and therefore she has by the fires of martyrdom revealed the existence of the true Church, even in the darkest ages. The word of God has been read even in the most apostate Churches; the Psalter, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, have always been included in the services of the most corrupt Churches; so that in every age there has been a public profession of the truth, in which some sincere hearts have joined.

This is not a point which needs to be proved, as all Christians are herein agreed. If, however, the Church is perpetual, it follows that everything necessary to its preservation and extension must also be perpetual. The Scriptures teach that the word, sacraments, and the ministry, are the divinely appointed means for that purpose; and on this ground we may be assured, prior to any testimony from history, that these means have never failed, and never shall fail. The word of God has never perished. The books written by Moses and the prophets are still in the hands of the Church. The writings of the apostles have been preserved in their integrity, and are now translated into all the important languages of the globe. It is impossible that they should perish. Their sound has gone into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. So too with the sacraments. There is no pretence that baptism in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, has ever ceased to be administered agreeably to the divine command. And the Spirit of God has never failed to call men to the ministry of the word, and duly to authenticate their vocation. Whether there has been a regular succession of ordinations, is a small matter. Ordination confers neither grace nor office. It is the solemn recognition of the vocation of the Holy Ghost, which may be effectually demonstrated to the Church in other ways. The call of Farel and of Bunyan to the work of the ministry, though unordained by man, (if such were the fact,) is abundantly more evident than that of nine-tenths of the prelates of their day. In perpetuating his Church, God has therefore perpetuated his word, sacraments, and ministry, and we have his assurance that they shall continue to the end.

On the principles above stated, it is easy to answer the question so often put to Protestants by Romanists, "Where was your Church before the time of Luther?" Just where it was after Luther. *Ubi vera fides erat, ibi ecclesia erat.* The visible Church among the Jews had sunk into idolatry before the time of Hezekiah. That pious king cast down the idols, and restored the pure worship of God. Did that destroy the Church? The Christian Church at Jerusalem was long burdened with Jewish rites. When they were cast aside, did the Church cease to exist? The Church in Germany and England had become corrupted by false doctrines, and by idolatrous and superstitious ceremonies. Did casting away these corruptions destroy the Church in those lands? Does a man cease to be a man, when he washes himself?

Or, if Bellarmin and Mr. Palmer may say that the Church was continued during the Arian apostasy in the scattered professors of the true faith, why may not Protestants say that it was continued in the same way during the Romish apostasy? If the Jewish Church existed when idolatry prevailed all over Judea, why may not the Christian

Church have continued when image worship prevailed all over Europe? Truth alone is consistent with itself. The Protestant doctrine that the true Church consists of true believers, and the visible Church of professed believers, whether they be many or few, organized or dispersed, alone accords with the facts which Romanists and Protestants are alike forced to acknowledge. And that doctrine affords a ready answer to all objections derived from the absence of any conspicuous organization professing the true faith and worshipping God in accordance with his word. Admitting, therefore, that such witnesses of the truth as the Albigenses, Waldenses, and Bohemian brethren, do not form an unbroken succession of the visible Church, the doctrine that the Church is perpetual is none the less certain, and none the less consistent with Protestant principles. A man must be a Romanist in order to feel the force of the arguments of Romanists. He must believe the Church to be a visible society subject to the Pope, before he can be puzzled by the question, Where was the Church before the Reformation?

In like manner, if the above principles be correct, it is easy to see that the charge of schism cannot rest against Protestants. Schism is either separation, without just cause, from the true Church, or the refusing to commune with those who are really the children of God. If the Church consists of true believers, the Protestants did not withdraw from the fellowship of the Church; neither did they refuse to admit true believers to their communion. They did not form a new Church; they simply reformed the old. The same body which owned Jesus Christ as Lord, and professed his gospel from the beginning, continued to worship him and to confess his truth after the Reformation, without any solution in the continuity of its being. The fire which sweeps over the prairie may seem to destroy everything, but the verdure which soon clothes the fields with new life and beauty is the legitimate product of the life that preceded it. So the Church, although corruption or persecution may divest it of all visible indications of life, soon puts forth new flowers and produces new fruit, without any real discontinuance of its life. The only schismatics in the case are the Romanists, who denounce and excommunicate the Protestants because they profess the truth.

CHAPTER V.

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH UNION. [*]

In the January number of this journal, we published an article from the pen of a respected contributor, advocating the confederation of the various Presbyterian bodies in this country, of which there are at least eight or ten distinct organizations. That article presented in a clear light the serious evils which flow from this multiplicity of Presbyterian bodies. Not only the evils of sectarian jealousy and rivalry, but the enormous waste which it incurs of men, labour, and money. It did not propose an amalgamation of all these independent organizations, but suggested that while each should retain its own separate being, its order, discipline, and usages, the possession and control of its own property and institutions, all should be subject to one general synod, for the decision of matters of dispute, and the conduct of missionary and other benevolent operations, in which all Calvinistic Presbyterians can, without the sacrifice of principle, combine. The advantages of this plan are obvious, in the promotion of efficiency, in the consolidation of efforts, in the economy of men and means, and in the prevention of unseemly rivalry and interference. But we must take men and Churches as they are. Those who are liberal, and, shall we say, enlightened enough, thus to coöperate, may be persuaded into such an union. But if some Presbyterians believe that it is sinful to sing Watts's hymns, and that they would be false to their "testimony" and principles even to commune with those who use such hymns in the worship of God; what can be done? We cannot force them to think otherwise, and while they retain their peculiar views they are doomed to isolation.

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All Protestants agree that the Church in heaven and on earth is one. There is one fold, one kingdom, one family, one body. They all agree that Christ is the centre of this unity. Believers are one body in Christ Jesus; that is, in virtue of their union with him. The bond of

[* From article entitled, "*Principles of Church Union, and Reunion of Old and New School Presbyterians.*" *Princeton Review*, 1865, p. 272.]

this union between Christ and his people, apart from the eternal federal union constituted before the foundation of the world, is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. By one Spirit we are baptized into or constituted one body. That Spirit working faith in us, does thereby unite us to Christ in our effectual calling.

It follows from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit being the principle of unity, or the the bond which unites all believers to each other, and all to Christ, that all the legitimate manifestations of this unity must be referable to the Spirit's presence. That is, they must be his fruits, produced by his influence on the hearts of his people. As the Holy Spirit is a teacher—as he dwells in believers as an unction from the Holy One, which, as the apostle says, (1 John ii. 27,) teaches them all things, so that they need not that any man teach them, it follows that all true Christians agree in faith. They have one faith, as they have one Lord and one baptism. If they were perfect, that is, if they perfectly submitted to the guidance of the Spirit by his word and by his inward influence, this agreement in matters of faith would be perfect. But as this is not the case, as imperfection attaches to everything human in this life, the unity of faith among believers is also imperfect. Nevertheless it is real. It is far greater than would be inferred from the contentions of theologians, and it includes everything essential to Christianity. That there is one God; that the Godhead subsists in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that the Eternal Son of God assumed our nature, was born of a woman, and suffered and died for our salvation; that He is the only Saviour of men; that it is through his merit and grace men are delivered from the condemnation and power of sin; that all men being sinners, need this salvation; that it is only through the power of the Holy Ghost sinners are made partakers of the redemption of Christ; that those who experience this renewing of the Holy Ghost and are united to Christ, and they only, are made partakers of eternal life—these are doctrines which enter into the faith of all Christian Churches, and of all true believers. As it is not for us to say what is the lowest degree of knowledge necessary to salvation, so it is not for us to determine, with precision and confidence, what degree of aberration from the common faith of Christians forfeits the communion of saints. We know indeed that those who deny the Son, deny the Father also, and that if any man believe that Jesus is the Son of God, he is born of God.

2. The Holy Spirit is not only a teacher but a sanctifier. All those in whom he dwells are more or less renewed after the image of God, and consequently they all agree in their religious experience. The Spirit convinces all of sin, *i. e.*, of guilt, moral pollution, and helplessness. He reveals to all the righteousness of Christ; *i. e.*, the

righteousness of his claims to be received, loved, worshipped, and obeyed, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. He excites in all in whom he dwells the same holy affections, in greater or less degrees of strength and constancy. True Christians, therefore, of all ages and in all parts of the world, are one in their inward spiritual life, in its principles and its characteristic exercises. The prayers, the hymns, the confessions and thanksgivings, which express the yearning desires and outgoings of soul of one, suits all others. This is a bond of fellowship which unites in mystic union the hearts of all people of God, and makes them one family or household.

3. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of love, and love is one of the fruits of his presence. The command of Christ to his disciples, so often repeated by him and his apostles, is written on the heart by the Spirit, and becomes a controlling law in all his people. This is not mere benevolence, nor philanthropy, nor friendship, nor any form of natural affection. It is a love of the brethren because they are brethren. It is a love founded on their character and on their relation to Christ. It extends therefore to all Christians without distinction of nation, or culture, or ecclesiastical association. It leads not only to acts of kindness, but to religious fellowship. It expresses itself in the open and cordial recognition of every Christian as a Christian, and treating him accordingly. We confess Christ when we confess his followers to be our brethren; and it is one form of denying Christ to refuse to acknowledge his disciples as such. Inasmuch as ye did it unto them, ye did it unto me, are very comprehensive, as well as very solemn words.

It is thus that all believers as individuals are one spiritual body. But the union of believers extends much farther than this. Man is a social being, and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the people of God is an organizing principle. As men, in virtue of their natural constitution, form themselves into families, tribes, and nations, united not only by community of nature and of interests, but by external organic laws and institutions; so believers in Christ, in virtue of their spiritual nature, or under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the principle of spiritual life, form themselves into societies for the propagation and culture of their spiritual nature.

This leads 1, to their uniting for the purposes of Christian worship, and the celebration of the Christian ordinances. 2. To the institution of church government, in order to carry out the injunctions of the word of God, and the exercise of mutual watch and care, or for the exercise of discipline. It arises out of the nature of Christianity, in other words, it arises out of the state of mind produced in believers by the indwelling of the Spirit, that they should, under the guidance of the written word, adopt means of deciding on the admission of members

to the Church, and upon the exclusion of the unworthy, as well as for the selection or appointment of the officers necessary for their edification. Thus individual or separate congregations are formed. The natural principle of association of such individual Churches is proximity. Those believers who reside sufficiently near each to make it possible or convenient for them to meet from Sabbath to Sabbath, would naturally unite for the purposes above indicated.

3d. The unity of the Church, however, continues. These separate congregations constitute one Church. First, because they have the same faith, and the same Lord. Secondly, because they are associated on the same terms; so that a member admitted to one, becomes a member of the Church universal; and a member excluded from one congregation is thereby excluded from the fellowship of all. It would indeed be an anomaly, if the man whom Paul required the Corinthians to excommunicate, could by removing to Philippi be restored to the communion of the saints. Thirdly, because every single congregation is subject to the body of other Churches. Believers are required by the word, and impelled by the indwelling of the Spirit, to be subject to their brethren in the Lord. The ground of this subjection is not the fact that they are neighbours, and therefore is not confined to those with whom they are united in daily or weekly acts of worship. Nor does it rest on any contract or mutual covenant, so as to be limited to those to whom we may agree to obey. It is founded on the fact that they are brethren; that the Spirit of God dwells in them, and therefore extends to all the brethren. The doctrine that a Church is formed by mutual covenant, and that its authority is limited to those who agree together for mutual watch and care, is as inconsistent with the nature of Christianity and the word of God, as that parental authority is founded on a covenant between the parent and the children. Children are required to obey their parents, because they are parents, and not because they have covenanted to obey them. In like manner we are required to obey our brethren, because they are brethren; just as we are bound to obey the wise and good, because they are what they are; or as we are bound to obey reason and conscience, because they are reason and conscience; or God, because he is God. Mutual covenants as the ground and limitation of church authority, and the "social compact" as the ground of civil government, are alike anti-scriptural. The Church therefore remains one body, not only spiritually, but outwardly. Each individual congregation is a member of an organic whole, as the several members of the human body are united not only by the inward principle of life common to them all, but in external relation and mutual dependence. The eye cannot say to the ear, nor the hand to the foot, "thou art not of the body."

It follows from what has been said, that the Church in any one town or city would be subject to those in its immediate vicinity, and those again to the Churches in a larger circle, and these to the Church universal. Thus by an inward law, provincial and national Churches, or ecclesiastical organizations, would be formed, all inwardly and outwardly connected, and all subject to the Church as a whole. The representative principle which pervades the Bible, and which has its foundation in the nature of man, is also founded in the nature of the Church, and is necessarily involved in her organization. As it is physically impossible that all the people should assemble for the administration of government and discipline, it is a matter of necessity that the power of the Church should be exercised through its properly appointed representatives—so that this organic outward union of the Church, as the expression of its inward spiritual unity, becomes feasible, and has to a large extent been actual.

It can hardly be denied that such is the normal or ideal state of the Church. This is the form which it would in fact have assumed, if it had not been for disturbing influences. A tree planted under favourable circumstances of soil and climate, and with free scope on every side, assumes its normal shape and proportions, and stands forth the realization of its idea. But if the soil or climate be uncongenial, or if the tree be hedged in, it grows indeed, but in a distorted shape, and with cramped and crooked limbs. This has been the actual history of the Church. The full and free development of its inward life has been so hindered by the imperfection of that life itself, and by adverse external influences, that instead of filling the earth with its branches, or standing one and symmetrical, as a cedar of Lebanon, or an oak of Bashan, it is rent and divided, and her members twisted out of their natural shape and proportions.

These adverse influences, although partly external, (geographical and political,) have been principally from within. As external union is the product and expression of spiritual unity; if the latter be defective, the former must be imperfect. Christians have not been so united in their views of Christian doctrine and order as to render it possible for them all to be joined in one organized external body. Romanists (especially of the genuine ultramontane school) assume that Christ constituted his Church in the form of an absolute monarchy, and appointed the bishop of Rome its head, and invested him with absolute power to decide all questions of doctrine and morals, and with universal authority to exercise discipline; making him, in short, his vicar, with plenary power upon earth; and that the Church can exist under no other form, so that to deny the authority of the Pope is to secede from the Church. As no man can be a member of the Russian

empire and enjoy its privileges, who does not acknowledge the authority of the Czar, so no one can be a member of the Romish Church who does not acknowledge the authority of the Pope. This theory of the nature and organization of the Church, and of the condition of membership therein, of necessity separates those who adopt it from all other Christians. If they are right, all who protest and refuse to acknowledge the Bishop of Rome as their sovereign lord, are schismatics. If they are wrong, then the crime of schism rests on them. In either case, however, the Church is divided.

Prelatists, on the other hand, hold to the perpetuity of the apostleship, and assume that bishops are the official successors of the apostles, and ought to be accepted and obeyed as such. The class of those who adopt this theory teach that the being of the Church depends on this principle. As in the early Church those only were recognized as members who received the doctrines and submitted to the authority of the apostles, so now those only are in the Church who yield like subjection to the prelates having apostolic succession. Another class, while they do not go to this extreme, still hold that it is the duty of all Christians to adopt and submit to the episcopal organization of the Church, and to render canonical obedience to its prelates.

Presbyterians are fully persuaded, from their interpretation of the Scriptures, that the office of the apostles was temporary; that they have no official successors, and that presbyters are the highest permanent officers of the Church, according to its original design and institution. They therefore cannot conscientiously submit to the claims of either papal or prelatical authority, and are necessitated to organize an external Church for themselves; or rather, as they believe, to maintain and perpetuate the original and divinely appointed mode of organization.

Independents believe that a Church is a company of believers united by mutual covenant for the purposes of Christian worship and discipline, and is complete in itself, subject to no ecclesiastical authority but that of its own members. Holding these views they cannot submit to pope, prelates, or presbyteries. Thus we have the external Church of necessity divided into three independent, antagonistic bodies. The evil, however, has not stopped here.

Baptists assume that immersion is essential to baptism; that baptism is necessary to membership in the visible Church; and that adult believers are the only proper subjects of that Christian ordinance. Hence they cannot recognize any persons as members of the Church who were either baptized in infancy, or to whom the rite was administered otherwise than by immersion. They are thus separated (at least externally) from the great body of Christians. Less diversities

of opinion than any of the above have led to the multiplication of sects. Some Presbyterians, believing that the civil magistrate is clothed with the power to maintain the purity of the Church, will not recognize the authority of any magistrate who has not bound himself by covenant to exercise his power to sustain the Church according to their views of gospel doctrine and order. These Covenanters, therefore, separate from other Presbyterians who do not agree with them in this fundamental principle. Otherwise they would be unfaithful, as they believe, to the testimony for the truth which they are bound to bear.

Others again believe that the Book of Psalms was divinely appointed to be used in public worship, and that the use of hymns written by uninspired men in the service of God is a violation of his commands. With such a belief they cannot unite in worship or communion with those who differ from them in this matter. Thus the evil has gone on increasing until the Church is split into sects and independent communions almost without number. Nevertheless, the existence of such divisions is the less of two evils. When men differ, it is better to avow their diversity of opinion or faith, than to pretend to agree, or to force discordant elements in a formal uncongenial union.

It is clear from the history of the Church, that diversity as to forms of Church government, or matters connected with worship and discipline, more than differences about doctrine, has been the cause of existing divisions of the Church. Many Romanists, Episcopalians, and all Presbyterians (with few exceptions) have been, and are, Augustinian in doctrine. In the Romish Church, during all the middle ages, Augustinians, Pelagians, and Semi-Pelagians were included in her communion. The same diversity notoriously exists in the Church of England, and in the Episcopal Churches of this country at the present day. These Churches are one, not in doctrine, but in virtue of their external organization, and subjection to one and the same governing body. In the Romish Church the principle or centre of union is the Pope; in the Church of England the king in council; in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, the General Convention. The Presbyterians of Scotland, subject to the same General Assembly, constitute one Church; those subject to another Assembly constitute another. And so it is in the United States. Churches therefore may agree in their standards of doctrine, in their form of government, and mode of worship, and yet be separate, independent bodies,

The existence of denominational Churches being unavoidable in the present imperfect state of inward spiritual unity among Christians, it becomes important to determine their relative duties. In the first place, it is their duty to combine or unite in one body (so far as

geographical and political considerations will permit), wherever and whenever the grounds of their separation are inadequate and unscriptural. They are not bound to unite when the differences between them are such as to prevent harmonious action; but where the points in which they differ are either such as the Scriptures do not determine, or which are of minor importance, it is obviously wrong that all the evils arising from the multiplication of sects should for the sake of these subordinate matters be continued. It is clearly impossible that Romanists and Protestants should be united in the same ecclesiastical organization. It is no less impossible that anything more than a federal union, such as may exist between independent nations, can be formed between Prelatists and Presbyterians, between Baptists and Pædobaptists, between Congregationalists and any other denomination recognizing the authority of Church courts. The principles conscientiously adopted by these different bodies are not only different, but antagonistic and incompatible. Those who hold them can no more form one Church than despotism and democracy can be united in the constitution of the same state. If by divine right all authority vests in the king, it cannot vest in the people. The advocates of these opposite theories therefore cannot unite in one form of government. It is no less obvious that if ecclesiastical power vests in one man—the bishop—it cannot vest in a presbytery. Episcopalians and Presbyterians therefore cannot unite. The latter deny the right of the bishop to the prerogatives which he claims; and the former deny the authority of the presbytery which it assumes. The same thing is equally plain of Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The former regard themselves as bound by the decisions of sessions and presbyteries; the latter refuse to recognize the right of Church courts to exercise discipline or government. So long, therefore, as such differences exist among Christians, it is plain that Romanists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, must form separate and independent bodies.

Differences as to doctrine do not form such insuperable barriers to Church union as diversity of opinion respecting ecclesiastical government. The creed of a Church may be so general, embracing only the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, such as can be professed with a good conscience by all true Christians, and thus ministers and members who differ widely within those limits may unite in one ecclesiastical organization. It is notorious that great differences of doctrine prevail in all large Churches, as in the Church of England, and the Church of Scotland, and in this country in the Episcopal Church, and in a less degree, perhaps, among Presbyterians. Much as to this point depends on the standards of the Church. Those standards may be so strict and so extended as to exclude all but Calvinists, or all but Arminians, as

is the case with the Wesleyans. It is a question of delicacy and difficulty how minute a confession of faith for an extended organization should be made. It may be too concise and latitudinarian, or it may be too minute and extended, requiring a degree of unanimity greater than is necessary, and greater than is attainable. Fidelity and harmony, however, both demand that the requirements of the standards, whatever they may be, should be sincerely adopted and enforced so far as every thing essential to their integrity is concerned.

But secondly, when union between different denominations is impracticable or undesirable, they have very important duties resting upon them in relation to each other. 1. The first and most comprehensive of these duties is mutual recognition. By this is meant the acknowledgment of their members as Christian brethren, and of the denominations or bodies themselves as Christian Churches. It is a great offence against Christian charity, and a direct violation of the command of Christ, to refuse to receive as our brethren those whom Christ receives as his disciples. It will not avail as an excuse for such repudiation of brotherhood, to say that others do not walk with us; that they do not adopt the same form of government, are not subject to the same bishops or Church courts; or that they do not unite with us in the same testimony as to non-essential matters; or do not agree with us in the same mode of worship. We might as well refuse to recognize a man as a fellow-creature because he was a monarchist and not a republican, a European and not an American, or an African and not a Caucasian. This is no small matter. Those who refuse to recognize Christians as Christians, sin against Christ and commit an offence which is severely denounced in the word of God. The same principle applies to Churches. To refuse to recognize as a Church of Christ any body of associated believers united for the purposes of worship and discipline, can be justified only on the ground that some particular form of organization has by Divine authority been made essential to the existence of the Church. And if essential to the existence of the Church, it must be essential to the existence of piety and to the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit. *Ubi Spiritus Sanctus ibi Ecclesia* is a principle founded upon the Scriptures, and held sacred by evangelical Christians in all ages. It was the legend on the banner which they raised in all their conflicts with Papists and High Churchmen from the beginning. A body of Christians, therefore, professing the true faith, and united for the purpose of worship and discipline, no matter how externally organized, is a Church which other Christians are bound to recognize as such, unless it can be proved that a particular mode of organization is in fact, and by Divine command, essential to the existence of the Church.

2. It is included in the acknowledgment that a body of Christians is a Church of Christ, that we should commune with its members in public worship and in the sacraments, and allow them to commune with us. This follows from the spiritual unity of the Church; from its having the same faith and the same Lord and God, and from the conditions of Church membership being the same for all Churches. A member of the Church at Jerusalem was entitled to the privileges of the Church of Antioch. If he was a Christian in one place, he was no less a Christian in another, and the rights of a Christian belonged to him wherever he went. It is obvious that this principle, although true in itself, is limited in its practical application. There may be something in the mode of conducting public worship or in the administration of the sacraments which hurts the consciences of other Christians, and prevents this freedom of communion in Church ordinances. If a Church requires all who partake of the Lord's Supper to receive the elements upon their knees, should any man conscientiously believe that this posture implies the worship of the consecrated bread, he cannot join in the service; or if a Church is so unfaithful as to admit to its fellowship those whom the law of Christ requires should be excluded, other Churches are not bound to receive them into fellowship. These and similar limitations do not invalidate the principle. It remains the plain duty of all Christian Churches to recognize each other as Churches, and hold intercourse one with another as such. And it is also their duty to make nothing essential either to the existence of the Church or to Church fellowship, which the word of God does not declare to be essential.

3. A third duty resting on different Churches or denominations, is to recognize the validity of each other's acts of discipline. If the Church, notwithstanding its division into sects, is still one; if the legitimate terms of membership are the same in all; and if the lawful grounds of exclusion are also the same, then it follows that a man excluded from one Church should be excluded from all other Churches. The meaning of the act of suspension or excommunication is, that the subject of censure is unworthy of Christian fellowship. If this be true in one place, it is true in every place. Civil tribunals act upon this principle. Not only do the courts of the same state respect the decisions of co-ordinate courts; but the judicial decisions of one state are held valid in other states, until just reason can be shown to the contrary. The rule is the same with regard to acts of Church discipline. The right to exercise discipline is to be acknowledged. The propriety and justice of the particular acts of discipline are to be presumed and acted upon. If clear evidence be afforded that those acts were unauthorized by the law of Christ, or manifestly unjust, other Churches, in

consistency with courtesy and Christian fellowship, may disregard them. If a Baptist Church should excommunicate a member because he had his children baptized, no pædobaptist Church could, on that ground, refuse to receive him. Or if one Presbyterian Church should subject a member to discipline because he joined in acts of worship in which hymns written by uninspired men were sung, other Presbyterians would be free to disregard such censures.

4. The same remarks apply to cases of ordination. If we are bound to recognize a given body as a Christian Church, we are bound to admit that it has a right to all the privileges and prerogatives belonging to a Church. Among those necessary prerogatives is the right to perpetuate and extend itself, and to appoint men to all scriptural offices necessary to that purpose. The ministry is a divine institution. It is appointed for the edification of saints and for the ingathering of those who are without. It is necessary, therefore, that a Church should have ministers; and therefore it is necessary that she should have the right to ordain. If the Presbyterians, Methodists, or Congregationalists are to be recognized as Christian Churches, their right to ordain ministers cannot be legitimately denied. It is one thing, however, to admit the right and another to admit the propriety of the mode in which it is exercised. If Presbyterians believe that the presbytery is the organ by which the Church signifies her conviction that a man is called by the Spirit to the work of the ministry, they may consistently refuse to receive as ministers of their own body those who have not been presbyterially ordained. Or if one presbytery should exercise its admitted right of ordination in contravention either of the laws of Christ, or of the rules of the Presbyterian Church, other presbyteries would not be bound to receive such minister as a member. The Bishop of Oxford ordained a man whom the Bishop of Chester refused to allow to officiate in his diocese. This was not schismatical. It was not a denial of the right of the Bishop of Oxford to ordain; it was only a denial that he had properly exercised that right in a given case. It is not necessary therefore that one denomination should concern itself how other denominational Churches exercise the right of appointing men to the ministry, provided it admit that they possess the right of appointment; and recognize those thus appointed as ministers of Christ. It can preserve the purity of its own ministry and Churches without incurring the charge of discourtesy or schism. Presbyterians may recognize Methodist preachers as ministers of the gospel, and welcome them to their pulpits, but they cannot be expected to receive them into their own body or make them pastors of their own Churches. The same of course may be said of Methodists in regard to Presbyterians.

5. Another important duty which rests upon denominations recognizing each other as Christian Churches, is that of non-interference. When one Church has planted itself in a field which it is abundantly able to cultivate, it is a breach of the principles of unity for another denomination to contend for joint-occupation. This is a great evil and one of constant occurrence. It often happens that one denomination organizes a Church in a village the population of which is barely sufficient for one Church, when another starts a rival Church, which can succeed only by drawing support from the other. When the field is the world, and so much land remains unoccupied, it is a great wrong thus to embarrass the operations of our fellow-Christians, and to burden the people with the support of two, three or more Churches, where one would do more good than many.

6. Finally, it is obviously the duty of different denominations to cultivate peace. They should avoid all the causes of alienation and ill-feeling, and do everything in their power to promote Christian love and fellowship. It is their duty, indeed, to maintain what they believe to be the truth, and endeavour to promote unity of faith; but they are bound to abstain from mere rivalry and sectarian conflicts.

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CHAPTER VI.

PROVINCE OF THE CHURCH. [*]

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THE world is governed by ideas. The triteness of this remark is only a proof of its importance. It is wonderful also how ideas percolate: how they silently diffuse themselves, as heat, or electricity, until they animate the mass of society, and manifest themselves in the most unexpected quarters. They often lie dormant, as it were, in the public mind, until some practical measure, some foregone conclusion or purpose as to a definite mode of action, calls them into notice. If they suit the occasion, if they answer a cherished purpose, and give to the intellect a satisfactory reason for what the will has determined upon, they are adopted with avidity. The history of every community will suggest abundant illustrations to every reader of the truth of this remark.

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic, "*Colonization and Theory of the Church;*" *Princeton Review*, 1859, p. 607.]

Great evils were long experienced in England from Erastianism. The intimate union of the Church and state, and the consequent subjection of the former to the latter, led to all manner of corruptions and oppressions. To escape these evils, one class of the Puritans went to the opposite extreme. They represented the visible Church as a purely spiritual body, consisting of the regenerated, united by special covenant for the worship of God, and mutual watch and care. This is Owen's idea. He says, believers are the matter of the Church, and the covenant is the form. No one, therefore, is a member of the Church but one, who giving satisfactory evidence of regeneration, voluntarily and personally professes his faith, and enters into a Church covenant with a number of fellow-believers. All else are of the world, in no way amenable to the Church or subject to its control. The sole object of Church organization is the worship of God and the exercise of discipline; and consequently its sole prerogative is to provide for divine worship and to receive and exclude members. This leads to the distinction between the Church and the parish. The former is the covenanted body of believers; the latter, the whole body of the community united in the maintenance of the ordinances of religion. There are two principles involved in this theory, the one, that each body of believers united by covenant for worship and discipline is a complete Church, and independent of all others; and the other, that the Church is a purely spiritual body having for its sole object the worship of God and the fellowship and purity of believers. The effects of this theory we see in the progress of development in New England. The Church, there, is what Napoleon's army would be were it disbanded into independent companies, each acting by, and for itself; this is the effect of Independency; or what these countries would be, if every village were a separate sovereignty. The effect of the other principle, relating to the nature and design of the Church, is utter inefficiency. Who ever heard of *the* Church saying or doing anything in New England? It is muzzled, manacled and fettered. It exists there in spite of the theory, in the spiritual union and fellowship of the people of God, but they have no means of organic action, and according to the prevalent notion, no right to act as an organic whole, nor to act even in its disjointed members, except for the purposes indicated above. If they have even to ordain a man to the ministry, found a seminary, send out missionaries, or do anything however intimately connected with Christ's kingdom, they must go out of the Church organization to do it. The most desperate evils may prevail in the form of heresies or immoralities, the Church as such can do nothing, and does nothing. We give full credit to the devotion of individual Christians in New England, and to the energy of their combined action in their voluntary associa-

tions of different kinds. But these are very poor substitutes for the natural and divinely appointed organs of Church action. Experience is teaching a sad lesson on this subject.

Of the two principles involved in this form of Puritanism, the Independent element has had no access to our Church. There is no susceptibility in our system of impression from that source. The two systems are antagonistic and repellent. They are incapable of combination. With regard to the other element, however, relating to the nature and prerogatives of the Church, the case is far different. That element has long been silently diffusing itself through our whole body. It affects our modes of thought, our expressions, and our ecclesiastical action. With us, in common parlance, the Church is the body of those who profess to be regenerated; to join the Church is to come to the Lord's table. Our Book declares that all baptized persons are members of the Church, and yet we constantly talk of such persons joining the Church when they come to the Lord's Supper. Personal and voluntary profession of saving faith is regarded as the condition of Church membership. The Church has no right of discipline except over such professors. And now the doctrine is advanced by one of the very foremost men of our whole communion, that the Church is in such sense a spiritual body, that she has no right even to recommend a benevolent society. She must confine herself to a purely spiritual vocation. She cannot denounce evil or patronize good out of her pale. It is not her business to attend "to the colonization of races, or to the arrest of the slave trade," or to anything else but the immediate spiritual affairs of men.

There is always a half truth in every error. It is true that the Church is not of this world; that it is not as such concerned in the affairs of the world; that it has nothing to do with politics, commerce, or agriculture, or any secular enterprise as such. All this follows from our theory of the Church, as logically and freely as from the Puritan doctrine. There is no necessity to manacle the Church to keep her hands off of politics.

In strong contrast with this whole Puritan doctrine is that idea of the Church which is the life of our system, which has revealed itself in act in every period of our history. It is, that while the true Church, or body of Christ, the Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ πνεῦμα, consists of the true people of God, yet by divine ordinance the children of believers are to be regarded and treated as included within its pale, and consecrated to God in Baptism, and therefore, in the sight of men, all baptized persons, in the language of our Book, are members of the Church, and under its watch and care.

This, of course, as remarked above, does not imply that they are all

to be admitted to the Lord's table, any more than that they are to be admitted to the ministry or eldership. God has prescribed the qualifications which the Church is to require of those whom she receives to full communion or to office. Still, baptized persons are members of the visible Church, until they renounce their birthright, or are excommunicated, and consequently subject to its government or discipline. This body constitutes one whole, so that one part is subject to a larger, and the larger to the whole. To the Church, in this sense, is committed not merely the work of public worship and exercising discipline, not simply or exclusively to exhort men to repentance and faith, but to assert, maintain, and propagate the truth. And by the truth, is to be understood the word of God, and all it contains, as the rule of faith and practice. This is the great prerogative and duty of the Church. Her divine commission is, "Go, teach all nations." From this it follows: 1. That she has the right to preach the gospel. This is the first, the most important, and pressing of her duties; and in the discharge of this duty, she ordains ministers and sends forth missionaries. Hence your Boards of Foreign and Domestic Missions, and of Church Extension. 2. She has the right to administer discipline, which is one of the divinely appointed means of preserving the truth. 3. The right to educate. If she is to teach all nations, she must train up teachers; she must prepare the minds of men to receive the truth, and she must communicate that truth by all the means at her command. Hence your schools, colleges, and theological seminaries; hence also your educational institutions among the heathen, and your establishments for printing and distributing Bibles, tracts, and religious books. On this foundation rest your Boards of Education and Publication. 4. It follows from the great commission of the Church, that it is her prerogative and duty to testify for the truth and the law of God, whereever she can make her voice heard; not only to her own people, but to kings and rulers, to Jews and Gentiles. It is her duty not only to announce the truth, but to apply it to particular cases and persons; that is, she is bound to instruct, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering. She is called of God to set forth and enjoin upon the consciences of men the relative duties of parents and children, of magistrates and people, of masters and slaves. If parents neglect their duties, she is called upon by her divine commission to instruct and exhort them. If magistrates transcend the limits of their authority, and trespass on the divine law, she is bound to raise her voice in remonstrance and warning. She has nothing to do with the state, in the exercise of its discretion within its own sphere; and therefore has no right to meddle with questions of policy, foreign or domestic. She has nothing to do with tariffs, or banks, or internal improvements. We say, with Dr.

Thornwell, "Let the dead bury the dead." Let Cæsar attend to his own affairs. But if Cæsar undertakes to meddle with the affairs of God; if the state pass any laws contrary to the law of God, then it is the duty of the Church, to whom God has committed the great work of asserting and maintaining his truth and will, to protect and remonstrate. If the state not only violates the Sabbath, but makes it a condition to holding office, that others should violate it; or if it legalizes piracy, or concubinage, or polygamy; if it prohibits the worship of God, or the free use of the means of salvation; if, in short, it does anything directly contrary to the law of God, the Church is bound to make that law known, and set it home upon the conscience of all concerned.

In many of our states, there are in force laws relating to marriage and divorce, in open conflict with the word of God. We hold that it is the duty of the Church of every denomination, in those states, to tell their legislators, that while they have the right to legislate about matters of property and civil rights at their discretion, under the constitution, they have no right to separate those whom God has joined together, or make that lawful which God has declared to be unlawful.

A few years since, Dr. Thornwell preached an elaborate sermon, setting forth what he believed to be the true teaching of the word of God on the subject of slavery. What he had a right to do, and was bound to do as a minister of the gospel, the Church has the right and obligation to do. If, on the one hand, Northern brethren would abstain from teaching, on that and other subjects, what God does not teach; and if, on the other hand, Southern brethren would clearly assert, in their capacity of ministers and a Church, what they fully believe God does teach, great good and God's blessing, we doubt not, would be the result. They are as much bound to teach the truth on this subject, as a Church as they are bound to do it as ministers; and they are surely as much bound to teach the law of God respecting the duties of masters and slaves, as they are to teach what God says of the duty of parents and children, of saints and sinners. There is a great temptation to adopt theories which free us from painful responsibilities; but we are satisfied that the brethren must, on reflection, be convinced that the duty to testify to the truth, to make it known, and to press it upon the hearts and consciences of men, is as much obligatory on the Church, in her aggregate capacity, as on her individual pastors. Her Confession and Catechisms are an admirable summary of that testimony; but she is no more to be satisfied with them, than the ministry is to be satisfied with reading the Confession of Faith, Sabbath after Sabbath to the people.

The principle which defines and limits the prerogative and duty of the Church in all such cases, seems to us perfectly plain.

She has nothing to do as a Church with secular affairs, with questions of politics or state policy. Her duty is to announce and enforce by moral means the law of God. If at any time, as may well happen, a given question assumed both a moral and political bearing, as for example, the slave-trade, then the duty of the Church is limited to setting forth the law of God on the subject. It is not her office to argue the question in its bearing on the civil or secular interests of the community, but simply to declare in her official capacity what God has said on the subject. To adopt any theory which would stop the mouth of the Church, and prevent her bearing her testimony to kings and rulers, magistrates and people, in behalf of the truth and law of God, is like administering chloroform to a man to prevent his doing mischief. We pray God that this poison may be dashed away, before it has reduced the Church to a state of inanition, and delivered her bound hand and foot into the power of the world. It is obvious that the same principle is applicable to ministers. They profane the pulpit when they preach politics, or turn the sacred desk into a rostrum for lectures on secular affairs. But they are only faithful to their vows when they proclaim the truth of God and apply his law to all matters whether of private manners or laws of the state. The whole history of the Presbyterian Church in Europe and America is instinct with this spirit. The Presbyterians of Scotland told the government that it had no right to establish Popery or Prelacy, and that they would not submit to it. Our fathers of the Revolution took sides with the country in the struggle for independence, and protested against the acts of the British Government tending to the introduction of Episcopacy. Before the Revolution the old Synod remonstrated with the authorities in Virginia, for their persecuting laws. In 1830 the General Assembly raised its voice against the persecution of Christians in Switzerland. It has, over and over, remonstrated with the Government of this country on the laws enjoining the carrying and distribution of the mails on Sunday. While admitting that the Bible does not forbid slave-holding, it has borne its testimony in the most explicit terms against the iniquity of many slave laws. It has many times enjoined on the conscience of the people the duty of instructing the colored population of our land, and patronized the establishment of schools for that purpose. It has never been afraid to denounce what God forbids, or to proclaim in all ears what God commands. This is her prerogative and this is her duty.

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Presbyterians have always held that the Church is bound to hold forth in the face of all men the truth and law of God, to testify against all infractions of that law by rulers or people, to lend her countenance

and support to all means, within and without her jurisdiction, which she believes to be designed and wisely adapted to promote the glory and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. This our Church has always done, and we pray God, she may continue to do even to the end.

CHAPTER VII.

RELATION OF THE CHURCH AND STATE. [*]

THIS is an exceedingly complicated and difficult subject. There are three aspects under which it may be viewed.

I. The actual relation which at different times and in different countries has subsisted between the two institutions.

II. The theory devised to justify or determine the limits of such existing relation.

III. The normal relation, such as should exist according to the revealed will of God, and the nature of the state and of the Church.

Before the conversion of Constantine, the Church was of course so far independent of the state, that she determined her own faith, regulated her worship, chose her officers, and exercised her discipline without any interference of the civil authorities. Her members were regarded as citizens of the state, whose religious opinions and practices were, except in times of persecution, regarded as matters of indifference. It is probable that much the same liberty was accorded to the early Christians as was granted by the Romans to the Jews, who were not only allowed, in ordinary cases, to conduct their synagogue services as they pleased, but to decide matters of dispute among themselves, according to their own laws. It is also stated that Churches were allowed to hold real estate before the profession of Christianity by the Emperor.

When Constantine declared himself a Christian, he expressed the relation which was henceforth to subsist between the Church and state, by saying to certain bishops, "God has made you the bishops of the internal affairs of the Church, and me the bishop of its external affairs." This saying has ever since been, throughout a large portion of Christendom, the standing formula for expressing the relation of the civil magistrate to the kingdom of Christ.

According to this statement, it belongs to the Church, through her own organs, to choose her officers, to regulate all matters relating to

[*Article, same title, *Princeton Review*, 1863, p. 679.]

doctrine, to administer the word and sacraments, to order public worship, and to exercise discipline. And to the state to provide for the support of the clergy, to determine the sources and amount of their incomes, to fix the limits of parishes and dioceses, to provide places of public worship, to call together the clergy, to preside in their meetings, to give the force of laws to their decisions, and to see that external obedience at least was rendered to the decrees and acts of discipline.

And this, in general terms, was the actual relation between the two institutions under the Roman emperors, and in many of the states which rose after the dissolution of the Roman empire. But it is easy to see that the distinction between the internal affairs which belonged to the bishops, and the external which belonged to the civil ruler, is too indefinite to keep two mighty bodies from coming into collision. If the magistrate provided the support of the bishops and sustained them in their places of influence, he felt entitled to have a voice in saying who should receive his funds, and use that influence. If he was to enforce the decisions of councils as to matters of faith and discipline, he must have some agency in determining what those decisions should be. If he was to banish from his kingdom those whom the clergy excluded from the Church, he must judge whether such exclusion was in itself just. And on the other hand, if the Church was recognized as a divine institution, with divinely constituted government and powers, she would constantly struggle to preserve her prerogatives from the encroachments of the state, and to draw to herself all the power requisite to enforce her decisions in the sphere of the state into which she was adopted, which she of right possessed in her own sphere as a spiritual, and, in one sense voluntary, society.

Simple and plausible, therefore, as the relation between the Church and state, as determined by Constantine, may at first sight appear, the whole history of the Church shows that it cannot be maintained. Either the Church will encroach on the peculiar province of the state, or the state upon that of the Church. It would require an outline of ecclesiastical history, from Constantine to the present day, to exhibit the conflicts and vacillations of these two principles. The struggle though protracted and varied in its prospects, was decided in favor of the Church, which under the papacy gained a complete ascendency over the state.

The papal world constituted one body, of which the Pope, as vicar of Christ, was the head. This spiritual body claimed a divine right to make its own laws, appoint its own officers, and have its own tribunals, to which alone its officers were amenable, and before whom all persons in the state, from the highest to the lowest, could be cited to appear. All ecclesiastical persons were thus withdrawn from the juris-

diction of the state; while all civil persons were subject to the jurisdiction of the Church. The Church being the infallible judge of all questions relating to faith and practice, and it being the obvious duty of all men to receive the decisions and obey the injunctions of an infallible authority, the state was bound to receive all those decisions and enforce all those commands. The civil magistrate had no judgment or discretion in the case; he was but the secular arm of the Church, with whose judgments, no matter how injurious he might regard them to his own prerogative, or to the interests of his people, he had no right to interfere. The Church, however, claimed the right to interfere in all the decisions of the civil power; because she only could judge whether those decisions were or were not inimical to the true faith, or consistent with the rule of duty. Hence arose what is called the indirect power of the Church in the temporal affairs of the state. Even without going to the extreme of claiming for the Pope, by divine right, a direct sovereignty over the Christian world, moderate Romanists of the Italian school claimed for the Pope, this indirect power in the civil affairs of kingdoms; that is, power of deciding whether any law or measure was or was not hurtful to the Church, and either to sanction or to annul it. And in case any sovereign should persist in a course pronounced by an infallible authority hurtful to the Church, the obligation of obedience on the part of his subjects was declared to be at an end, and the sovereign deposed.

In most cases, the actual relation between the Church and state is determined historically, *i. e.*, by the course of events, and then a theory invented to explain and justify it; but in the case of the papacy, it is probable the theory preceded and produced the actual relation. On the assumption of the external unity of the whole Church under a visible head, and of the infallibility of that visible body when speaking through its appropriate organ, the relation of the Church to the state, which Gregory strove to realize, and which did for ages subsist, is the normal relation; and it is therefore, at the present day, the very theory which is held by the great body of Romanists.

In practice, however, it was found intolerable, and therefore, especially in France, and later in Austria, the kings have resisted this domination, and asserted that as the state no less than the Church is of divine origin, the former has the right to judge whether the acts and decisions of the Church are consistent with the rights and interests of the state. The kings of France, therefore, claimed indirect power in the affairs of the Church, and exercised the right of giving a *placet*, as it was called, to acts of the Church; that is, they required that such acts should be submitted to them, and receive their sanction before taking effect in their dominions.

II. As the Reformation involved the rejection of the doctrine of the visible unity of the Church under one infallible head, it of necessity introduced a change in the relation between the state and the Church. This relation, however, was very different in different countries, and that difference was evidently not the result of any preconceived theory, but of the course of events. It was, therefore, one thing in England, another in Scotland, and another in Germany.

With regard to England, it may be said, in general terms, that the Reformation was effected by the civil power. The authority by which all changes were decreed, was that of the king and parliament. The Church passively submitted, subscribing articles presented for acceptance, and adopting forms of worship and general regulations prescribed for her use. This fact is so inconsistent with the high-church theory, that every effort is made by advocates of that theory, to evade its force, and to show that the change was the work of the Church itself. It is admitted, however, by episcopal writers themselves, that in the time of Henry and Edward, the great majority both of the clergy and the people, *i. e.*, the Church, was opposed to the reformation.

Henry rejected the authority of the Pope, though he adhered to the doctrines of Romanism. He declared himself by act of Parliament the head of the Church, and required all the bishops to give up their sees, suspending them from office, and then made each take out a commission from the crown, in which it was declared that all ecclesiastical power flowed from the sovereign, and that the bishops acted in his name, and by virtue of power derived from him.

The six articles were framed by his authority, in opposition to Cranmer and the real Reformers, and enacted by Parliament, and made obligatory under severe penalties, upon all the clergy. These articles affirm all the distinguishing doctrines of Romanism.

The clearest proof that they rested on the authority of the king is, that as soon as he died they were discarded, and a doctrinal formulary of an opposite character adopted.

Under Edward the Sixth, the actual practice was for the crown to appoint a certain number of the clergy to prepare the requisite formularies or measures, and then these, if approved by the king, were published in his name, and enforced by act of Parliament. The convocation and the clergy then gave their assent. It was thus the Prayer Book was prepared and introduced. Thus, too, the Articles of Religion were, under Edward, the act of the civil power alone. They were drawn up under Cranmer's direction, and with the assistance of other divines, but they were not the work of the Convocation, as their preamble would seem to imply; nor were they set forth by any authority

but that of the crown. *Short*, § 484. Under Elizabeth they were revised by the Convocation.

The actual relation of the Church to the state in England, is sufficiently indicated by these facts. The king was declared to be the supreme head of the Church; *i. e.*, the source of authority in its government, and the supreme judge of all persons and causes ecclesiastical, of whatever kind. The clergy were brought with great difficulty to make this acknowledgment, and therefore it cannot be said to be the spontaneous act of the Church. It was rather a usurpation. It is said that the acknowledgment was made with the saving clause, *quantum per Christi legem licet*, with regard to which, there is a dispute, whether it was in the first acknowledgment. The preponderance of evidence, so far as we know, is against it; and certain it is, it is not now in the oath. And it can make little difference, because the very end of the oath was to declare that Christ did allow the king the power which he claimed and exercised.

The king then, as head of the Church, changed the form of worship, introduced new articles of faith, suspended and appointed bishops, visited all parts of the Church to reform abuses, issued edicts regulating matters of discipline, granted commissions to the bishops to act in his name, and by act of Parliament declared that all jurisdiction, spiritual and temporal, emanates from him, and that all proceedings in the episcopal courts should be in his name.

These principles have ever been acted on in the Church of England; though with less flagrancy of course in the settled state of the Church than at the Reformation. All the proceedings, however, of Elizabeth; all the acts of James I. against the Puritans; of Charles I. in Scotland, in the introduction of episcopacy into that country; of Charles II. at his restoration, and even of William III. at the Revolution, when the non-juring bishops were excluded, were founded on the assumption of the absolute power of the state over the Church. And everything still rests on that foundation. The king still appoints all the bishops, and has the legal right to suspend them; all the binding authority of the Articles and Prayer Book rests on acts of Parliament. No man can be refused admission to the Church, no matter what his opinions or character, against the will of the state; and no man can be excommunicated but by civil process; and the ultimate decision, even in the trial of a bishop for heresy, is rendered by the king in council. *Whiston.*

Different theories have been devised to justify this entire subordination of the Church to the state. The early Reformers, Cranmer especially, were thoroughly Erastian; and held that the king was intrusted with the whole care of his subjects, as well concerning the administration of the word, as in things civil and political; and as he had under

him civil officers to act in his name, so he had Church officers, the one class being assigned, appointed, and selected by the authority of the king, as much as the other. Cranmer did not even hold to the necessity of any ordination by Church officers, considering the king's commission all sufficient. This whole theory rests on an exorbitant notion of the regal power.

A second theory supposes that there is no difference between a Christian state and a Church. A Church is a people professing Christianity, and they may adopt what form of government they please. This supposes not only that the details of Church government are not prescribed in Scripture, but that there is no government in the hands of Church officers at all ordained by Christ; but in whatever way the will of the sovereign power, *i. e.*, of the people, is expressed and exercised, is, as to its form, legitimate; and hence the best and most healthful form of Church government is that which most fully identifies the Church with the state. This is the doctrine of Dr. Arnold. Though this theory, if sound, might justify the existing state of things in England, it cannot justify the Reformation; for that was not carried on by the people, *i. e.*, the Church in its state capacity, but by the civil authority, in despite both of the clergy and the people.

High-churchmen take different grounds. Some admit the irregularity in the mode of proceeding under Henry and Elizabeth, but justify it on the ground of necessity, or of extraordinary emergency, calling for the exercise of extraordinary powers. Others, as Mr. Palmer, deny that the Church is responsible for those acts, or that she is to be judged by the preamble of acts of Parliament, or by the claims or acts of the crown, but exclusively by her own declarations and acts. And he endeavours to show that all the leading facts of the Reformation were determined by the Church. To do this, however, he is obliged to maintain that what the king did on the advice of a few divines, was done by the Church, which is as unreasonable as to refer the sanatory or legal regulations of a kingdom to the authority of the physicians or lawyers who may be consulted in drawing them up.

Mr. Palmer falls back on the theory suggested by Constantine, which assigns the internal government of the Church to bishops, and the external to the king. He accordingly denies that the king can, either by himself or by officers deriving their authority from him, pronounce definitions of faith, administer the word or sacraments, or absolve or excommunicate. He may, however, convene Synods, and preside in them; sanction their decisions, and give them the force of laws; he may refuse to sanction them, if contrary to the doctrines of the Catholic Church, or injurious to the state; he may receive appeals from Church-courts; preserve subordination and unity in the Church;

prevent, by civil pains and penalties, all secession from her communion, and found and endow new bishoprics.

This doctrine rests on the assumption, 1. That it is the design of the state, and the duty of its officers, to promote and sustain religion by civil pains and penalties; 2. That the Church is a divine institution, with a prescribed faith and discipline; and 3. That the marks of the true Church are so plain that no honest man can mistake them.

The only point in which this system differs from the papal doctrine on this subject is, that it allows the civil magistrate discretion whether he will enforce the decisions of the Church or not. This difference arises from the fact that tractarians do not pretend that provincial synods are infallible; and with such only has the king anything to do; whereas Romanists maintain that the pope, speaking *ex cathedra*, is infallible. There is room, therefore, for discretion in reference to the decisions of the former, but none in reference to those of the latter.

Mr. Palmer, however, is far from maintaining that the actual state of things corresponds with his theory, and most tractarians are loud in their complaints of the bondage under which the Church in England is now groaning.

III. *Lutherans.* In Germany the course of the Reformation was very different from what it was in England, and consequently the relation between the Church and state received a different form. The movement took its rise, and was guided in all its progress, in the former country, by Luther and his associates, and was sanctioned cordially by the people. He did not wait to be called up by the Elector to denounce the errors of popery, or to reform its abuses. He did both, and the people joined him. They besought the civil authorities to sanction these changes, and to protect and aid them in carrying them out. And the Electors slowly and cautiously granted their sanction. The Reformation here, therefore, did not proceed from the state, but really and truly from the Church, *i. e.*, the clergy and people, and the state sanctioned and joined it. Had the bishops generally coöperated in the work, it is probable, from the frequent declarations of Luther and Melancthon, they would in Germany, as in Sweden, have been allowed, not as a matter of right, but of expediency, to retain the executive power in their hands. But as they had not only greatly neglected all discipline in the Church, and finally sided with Rome, the Reformers called on the electors to appoint *consistories*, to be composed, as they expressed it, "of honest and learned men," to supply the deficiency. These bodies were at first designed simply to administer discipline. They were to be Church courts, for the trial and punishment of spiritual offences. As, however, the bishops withdrew, the powers of the consistories were enlarged, and they became on the one hand the organ of

the Church. As the members of these consistories are appointed by the state, and as they are the organs of administering both the internal and external affairs of the state, the prince is, in Lutheran countries, the real possessor of Church power, *i. e.*, it is regarded as inhering in him. The whole administration of its affairs are in his hands, and whatever changes are introduced, are made by his authority. Accordingly, the union of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches and the introduction of a new liturgy, was the act of the late king of Prussia. At first it was only advisory on his part, but he subsequently began to coerce compliance with his will. This extreme exercise of authority, however, met with great opposition, and was, by a large part of the Church, considered as transcending the legitimate power of the state. The present king disclaims such power, and says he wishes to know the mind of the Church, and stands ready to carry out her wishes, if consistent with his conscience.

The actual power of the state in Lutheran countries was the result of the Reformation, and not of a theory of what ought to be the relation of the Church and state. Different theories have been suggested, in order to give form and intelligibility to this relation. The most common is, that the prince is there, and, by the will of the Church, heir to the power of the bishops. His power is therefore called an episcopate. This theory includes the following points. 1. Civil and ecclesiastical government are distinct. 2. The object of Church government is mainly the preservation of the truth. 3. Church power belongs by the ordinance of God to the Church itself, and to the prince as the highest member of the Church, and since the religious peace, by the legal devolution on him of the power of the bishops. 4. This authority is, however, only external, a *potestas externa*, in the exercise of which he is bound to act according to the judgment of the clergy, and the people have the right of assent or dissent. This is the doctrine of the three orders, as it is called, that is, that Church power belongs to the Church as composed of prince, clergy, and people.

5. Hence the Prince possesses civil and ecclesiastical power in different ways and on different subjects. This is considered the orthodox, established doctrine of the Lutheran Church on the relation of the Church and state. It is the doctrine of all the older, eminent theologians of that Church. *Stahl's Kirchenverfassung*, p. 20. The other theories are the Territorial, *i. e.*, Erastian; the collegiate (voluntary union) and the Hegelian—that the state is God's kingdom; the Church but a form of the state. The prince, the point of unity; having the full power of both. He appoints, (not merely confirms bishops,) prescribes liturgies, and gives the contents as well as the binding form to all Church decisions. *Stahl*, p. 125.

IV. *Reformed Church.*

According to the Reformed Church of Geneva, Germany, France, Holland, and Scotland, the relation of the state and Church is taught in the following propositions as given and sustained by Turrettin. Lec. 28, Ques. 34.

1. Various rights belong to the Christian magistrate in reference to the Church.

This authority is confined within certain limits, and is essentially different from that of pastors. These limits are thus determined. *a.* The magistrate cannot introduce new articles of faith, or new rites or modes of worship. *b.* He cannot administer the word and sacraments. *c.* He does not possess the power of the keys. *d.* He cannot prescribe to pastors the form of preaching or administration of the sacraments. *e.* He cannot decide on ecclesiastical affairs, or on controversies of faith, without consulting the pastors.

On the other hand, *a.* He ought to establish the true religion, and when established, faithfully uphold it, and if corrupted, restore and reform it. *b.* He should, to the utmost, protect the Church by restraining heretics and disturbers of its peace, by propagating and defending the true religion, and hindering the confession of false religions. *c.* Provide proper ministers, and sustain them in the administration of the word and sacraments, according to the word of God, and found schools as well for the Church as the state. *d.* See that ministers do their duty faithfully according to the canons of the Church and the laws of the land. *e.* Cause that confessions of faith and ecclesiastical constitutions, agreeable to the Scriptures, be sanctioned, and when sanctioned adhered to. *f.* To call ordinary and extraordinary synods, to moderate in them, and to sanction their decisions with his authority.

The question, "whether the state can rightfully force its subjects to profess the faith," is answered in the negative. The question, "whether heretics should be capitally punished," is answered in the affirmative, provided their heresy is gross and dangerous to the Church and state, and provided they are contumacious and malignant in the defence and propagation of it.

The Westminister Confession, as adopted by the Church of Scotland, taught the same general doctrine. The 23d chap. of that Confession contains the following clause: "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the faith of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline be prevented or reformed, and all ordinances of

God duly settled, administered, and observed ; for the better effecting whereof he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God."

When this Confession was adopted by our Church in 1729, this clause was excepted, or adopted only in a qualified manner ; and when our present constitution was adopted in 1789, it and the corresponding passages in the Larger Catechism were omitted. It has, however, always been part of the Confession of the Church of Scotland, (and was, it is believed, retained in the Cambridge and Saybrooke Platforms as adopted in New England).

In words, this clause seems to cover all the ground taken by Mr. Palmer. History shows, however, that the Church in Scotland has even been, in a great measure, independent of the state, and for generations in conflict with it. The practical interpretation, therefore, of the doctrine here taught, has been to deny to the civil magistrate any real control in ecclesiastical affairs.

The late Dr. Cunningham, in one of his tracts, occasioned by the recent controversies, thus expounds the doctrine of this passage.

1. He says, by the civil magistrate is to be understood the supreme civil power; and that the Confession merely teaches what the civil ruler will find to be his duty when he comes to the study of the word of God.

2. That the rule of all his judgments is the word of God.

3. That the Confession denies to the civil magistrate all right to the ministration of the word and sacraments, or to the power of the keys, that is, to the management of the ordinary affairs of the Church of Christ; and states, that as it is the duty of every private person to judge for himself whether the doctrines, discipline, and decisions of a Church, are according to the word of God, and if so, then to receive, obey, and promote them ; so also it is the duty of the civil magistrate, in his sphere, and in the exercise of his legitimate authority and influence, to do the same.

In that branch of the Reformed Church which was transported to this country by the Puritans, and established in New England, this same doctrine as to the duty of the magistrate, and relation to the Church and state, was taught, though under a somewhat modified form. The New England theory was more that of a theocracy. All civil power was confined to the members of the Church, no person being either eligible to office, or entitled to the right of suffrage, who was not in full communion of some Church. The laws of the Church became thus the laws of the land, and the two institutions were in a measure merged together. The duty of the magistrate to make and

enforce laws for the support of religion, for the suppression of heresy and punishment of heretics, was clearly taught. John Colton even wrote a book to prove that persecution was a Christian duty.

The theory on which this doctrine of the Reformed Church is founded, is, 1. That the State is a divine institution, designed for promoting the general welfare of society, and as religion is necessary to that welfare, religion falls legitimately within the sphere of the state. 2. That the magistrate, as representing the state, is, by divine appointment, the guardian of the law, to take vengeance on those who transgress, and for the praise of those who obey; and as the law consists of two tables, one relating to our duties to God, and the other to our duties to men, the magistrate is, *ex officio*, the guardian of both tables, and bound to punish the infractions of the one, as well as of the other. 3. That the word of God determines the limits of the magistrate's office in reference to both classes of his duties; and as, under the Old Testament, there was a form of religion, with its rites and officers prescribed, which the magistrate could not change, so there is under the New. But under the Old, we find with this Church government the kings were required to do, and in fact did do much, for the support and reformation of religion, and the punishment of idolators; so they are now bound to act on the same principles, making the pious kings of the Old Testament their model.

V. Relation between the Church and state in this country.

The doctrine current among us on this subject is of very recent origin. It was unknown to the ancients before the advent. In no country was religion disconnected with the state. It was unknown to the Jews. The early Christians were not in circumstances to determine the duty of Christian magistrates to the Christian Church. Since the time of Constantine, in no part of Christendom, and by no denomination, has the ground been assumed, until a recent period, that the state and Church should be separate and independent bodies. Yet to this doctrine the public mind in this country has already been brought, and to the same conclusion the convictions of God's people in all parts of the world seem rapidly tending. On what grounds, then, does this novel, yet sound, doctrine rest? This question can only be answered in a very general and superficial manner on the present occasion.

1. In the first place it assumes that the state, the family, and the Church, are all divine institutions, having the same general end in view, but designed to accomplish that end by different means. That as we cannot infer from the fact the family and the state are both designed to promote the welfare of men, that the magistrate has the right to interfere in the domestic economy of the family; so neither can we infer from the Church and state having the same general end, that the one

can rightfully interfere with the affairs of the other. If there were no other institution than the family, we might infer that all the means now used by the Church and state, for the good of men, might properly be used by the family; and if there were no Church, as a separate institution of God, then we might infer that the family and the state were designed to accomplish all that could be effected. But as God has instituted the family for domestic training and government; the state, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, and the Church for the promotion and extension of true religion, the three are to be kept distinctive within their respective spheres.

2. That the relative duties of these several institutions cannot be learned by reasoning *a priori* from their design, but must be determined from the word of God. And when reasoning from the word of God, we are not authorized to argue from the Old Testament economy, because that was avowedly temporary, and has been abolished; but must derive our conclusions from the New Testament. We find it there taught,

(1.) That Christ did institute a Church separate from the state, giving it separate laws and officers.

(2.) That he laid down the qualifications of those officers, and enjoined on the Church, not on the state, to judge of their possession by candidates.

(3.) That he prescribed the terms of admission to, and the grounds of exclusion from, the Church, and left with the Church its officers to administer these rules.

These acts are utterly inconsistent with Erastianism, and with the relation established in England between the Church and state.

3. That the New Testament, when speaking of the immediate design of the state, and the official duties of the magistrate, never intimates that he has those functions which the common doctrine of the Lutheran and Reformed Church assign him. This silence, together with the fact that those functions are assigned to the Church and Church officers, is proof that it is not the will of God that they should be assumed by the state.

4. That the only means which the state can employ to accomplish many of the objects said to belong to it, *viz.*, pains and penalties, are inconsistent with the example and commands of Christ; with the rights of private Christians, guarantied in the word of God, (*i. e.*, to serve God according to the dictates of his conscience,) are ineffectual to the true end of religion, which is voluntary obedience to the truth, and productive of incalculable evil. The New Testament, therefore, does not teach that the magistrate is entitled to take care that true religion is established and maintained; that right men are appointed to

Church offices; that those officers do their duty; that proper persons be admitted, and improper persons be rejected from the Church; or that heretics be punished. And on the other hand, by enjoining all these duties upon the Church, as an institution distinct from the state, it teaches positively that they do not belong to the magistrate, but to the Church. If to this it be added that experience teaches that the magistrate is the most unfit person to discharge these duties; that his attempting it has always been injurious to religion, and inimical to the rights of conscience, we have reason to rejoice in the recently discovered truth, that the Church is independent of the state, and that the state best promotes her interests by letting her alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRESBYTERIANISM. [*]

MUCH time was devoted, at the late meeting of the General Assembly at Rochester [1860], to the discussion of the question, What is Presbyterianism? That question, indeed, had only a remote connection with the subject before the house. That subject was the Boards of the Church. These, on the one side, were pronounced to be not only inexpedient, but unscriptural and unlawful; not only useless excrescences, but contrary to the divine rule prescribed in the word of God, and a reproach to our blessed Saviour. We were called upon to reject them as a matter of duty, or forfeit our allegiance to Christ. On the other side, it was contended that the Boards were not only highly useful, as experience had proved, but that they were entirely within the discretion which Christ had granted to his Church, and therefore compatible with obedience to his will, and with our allegiance to his authority.

To make out any plausible argument in support of the doctrine that the Boards are anti-scriptural, required, of course, a peculiar theory of Presbyterianism; a theory which should exclude all discretionary power in the Church, and tie her down to modes of action prescribed as of divine authority in the word of God. That theory, as propounded by Dr. Thornwell in his first speech on the subject, was understood to embrace the following principles: 1. That the form of government for the Church, and its mode of action, are prescribed in the word of God, not merely as to its general principles, but in all its details, as completely

[* Article, same title, *Princeton Review*, 1860, p. 546.]

as the system of faith or the moral law; and therefore everything for which we cannot produce a "Thus saith the Lord," is unscriptural and unlawful.

2. Consequently, the Church has no more right to create a new office, organ, or organization, for the exercise of her prerogatives or the execution of her prescribed work, than she has to create a new article of faith, or to add a new command to the Decalogue.

3. That the Church cannot delegate her powers. She must exercise them herself, and through officers and organs prescribed in the Scriptures. She has no more right to act by a vicar, than Congress has to delegate its legislative power, or a Christian to pray by proxy.

4. That all executive, legislative and judicial power in the Church is in the hands of the clergy, that is, of presbyters, who have the same ordination and office, although differing in functions.

5. That all power in the Church is joint, and not several. That is, it can be exercised only by Church courts, and not in any case by individual officers.

In opposition to this general scheme, "the brother from Princeton" propounded the following general principles:

1st. That all the attributes and prerogatives of the Church arise from the indwelling of the Spirit, and consequently, where he dwells, there are those attributes and prerogatives.

2d. That as the Spirit dwells not in the clergy only, but in the people of God, all power is, *in sensu primo*, in the people.

3d. That in the exercise of these prerogatives, the Church is to be governed by principles laid down in the word of God, which determine, within certain limits, her officers and modes of organization; but that beyond those prescribed principles and in fidelity to them, the Church has a wide discretion in the choice of methods, organs and agencies.

4th. That the fundamental principles of our Presbyterian system are first, the parity of the clergy; second, the right of the people to a substantive part in the government of the Church; and third, the unity of the Church, in such sense, that a small part is subject to a larger, and a larger to the whole.

Without attempting any development of these principles, the remarks of the speaker in reply to Dr. Thornwell's first speech, were directed to the single point on which the whole question in debate turned. That was, Is the Church tied down in the exercise of her prerogatives, and in the performance of her work, to the organizations or organs prescribed in the New Testament? In other words, is everything relating to the government and action of the Church laid down in detail in the word of God, so that it is unlawful to employ any organs or agencies not therein enjoined? If this is so, then the Boards

are clearly unlawful; if it is not so, the having them, or not having them, is a matter of expediency.

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As to the first of the above-mentioned principles, it was not presented as anything peculiar to Presbyterianism. It is simply an axiom of evangelical religion, admitted and advocated in every age of the Church by all opponents of the ritual or hierarchical theory. As no man is a Christian unless the Spirit of Christ dwells in him, so no body of men is a Church, except so far as it is organized, animated and controlled by the same Spirit. We may be bound to recognize men as Christians who are not really such, and we may be bound to recognize Churches who are, in fact, not governed by the Spirit. But in both cases they are assumed to be what they profess. We might as well call a lifeless corpse a man, as a body without the Spirit of God a Church. The one may be called a dead Church, as a lifeless human body is called a dead man. Nevertheless the Spirit makes the Church, as the soul makes the man. The Bible says that the Church is a temple, because it is the habitation of God through the Spirit. It is the body of Christ, because animated by the Spirit of Christ. It is said to be one, because the Spirit is one. "For," says the apostle, "as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." It is the baptism, or indwelling of the Spirit, therefore, which constitutes the Church one body. And as (so far as our present state of existence is concerned,) where the soul is, there the body is, so in like manner, where the Spirit is, there is the Church, and where the Spirit is not, the Church is not. The motto inscribed on the banner which the early evangelical fathers raised against the assumption of ritualists was, UBI SPIRITUS DEI, IBI ECCLESIA. That banner Popes and Prelatists, Patriarchs and Priests have for a thousand years striven in vain to trample in the dust. It has been handed down from one band of witnesses for the truth to another, until it now waves over all evangelical Christendom. The dividing line between the two great contending parties in the Church universal, is precisely this—Is the Church in its essential idea an external body held together by external bonds, so that membership in the Church depends on submission to a hierarchy? or is it a spiritual body owing its existence and unity to the indwelling of the Spirit, so that those who have the Spirit of God are members of the Church or body of Christ? The Papists say we are not in the Church, because we are not subject to the Pope; we say that we are in the Church if the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. Of course Dr. Thornwell believes all this as firmly as we do. He has as fully and clearly avowed

this doctrine as any man among us. In the very latest published production of his pen, he says:

"The idea of the Church, according to the Reformed conception, is the complete realization of the decree of election. It is the whole body of the elect considered as united to Christ their Head. As actually existing at any given time, it is that portion of the elect who have been effectually called to the exercise of faith, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost. It is, in other words, the whole body of existing believers. According to this conception, none are capable of being Church members but the elect, and none are ever, in fact, Church members, but those who are truly renewed. The Church is, therefore, the communion of saints, the congregation of the faithful, the assembly of those who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. That this conception is fundamental in all the Reformed Confessions, and among all the Reformed theologians worthy of the name, we will not insult the intelligence of our readers by stopping to prove. The Church was co-extensive with faith. As true faith in the heart will manifest itself by the confession of the mouth, it is certain that the children of God, wherever they have the opportunity, will be found professing their faith; and as there is no method of searching the heart, and discriminating real from false professors but by the walk, all are to be accepted as true believers whose lives do not give the lie to their pretensions. The body of professors, therefore, is to be accepted as the Church of Christ, because the truly faithful are in it. The gospel is never preached without converting some—these will profess their faith, and will vindicate to any society the name of a Church. As to those professors who are destitute of faith, they are not properly members of the Church; they are wolves among sheep; tares among the wheat; warts and excrescences upon the body. The visible Church is, accordingly, the society or congregation of those who profess the true religion; among whom the gospel is faithfully preached, and the sacraments duly administered. And it is simply because such a society cannot be destitute of genuine believers that it is entitled to the name of the Church. Profession must be accepted in the judgment of men as equivalent to the possession of faith, and the body of professors must pass for saints, until hypocrites and unbelievers expose themselves." *

This is the idea of the Church almost *totidem verbis*, which was presented years ago in this journal. Dr. Thornwell derived his doctrine from the same source from which we drew ours, viz. the Scriptures and the Confessions of the Protestant Churches, and writings of the Reformed theologians. This is the doctrine which was presented in few words on the floor of the General Assembly, where it was stated that the indwelling of the Spirit constitutes the Church, so that where the Spirit is, there the Church is.

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It has been strangely inferred that if we hold that all the attributes

* *Southern Presbyterian Review* for April, 1860, p. 15.

and prerogatives of the Church arise from the indwelling of the Spirit, we must also hold that nothing relating to the organization of the Church is prescribed in the word of God. It might as well be inferred from the fact that the soul fashions and informs the human body, that the body may at one time have the form of a man, and at another, the form of a beast. There are fixed laws assigned by God, according to which all healthful and normal development of the body is regulated. So it is with regard to the Church. There are fixed laws in the Bible, according to which all healthful development and action of the external Church are determined. But as within the limits of the laws which control the development of the human body, there is endless diversity among different races, adapting them to different climes and modes of living, so also in the Church. It is not tied down to one particular mode of organization and action, at all times and under all circumstances. Even with regard to doctrinal truth, we may hold that the Spirit dwells in the believer as a divine teacher, and that all true divine knowledge comes from his inward illumination, without denying that a divine, authoritative rule of faith is laid down in the word of God, which it is impossible the inward teaching of the Spirit should ever contradict. We may believe that the indwelling Spirit guides the children of God in the path of duty, without at all questioning the authority of the moral law as revealed in the Bible. A Christian, however, may believe and do a thousand things not taught or commanded in the Scriptures. He cannot rightfully believe or do anything contrary to the word of God, but while faithful to their teachings and precepts, he has a wide field of liberty of thought and action. It is precisely so with regard to the organization of the Church. There are certain things prescribed, to which every Church ought to conform, and many things as to which she is at liberty to act as she deems best for God's glory, and the advancement of his kingdom. All we contend for is that everything is not prescribed; that every mode of organization or action is not either commanded or forbidden; that we must produce a "Thus saith the Lord" for every thing the Church does. We must indeed be able to produce a "Thus saith the Lord" for everything, whether a truth, or a duty, or a mode of ecclesiastical organization or action, which we make obligatory on the conscience of other men. But our liberty of faith and action beyond the prescriptions of the word of God, is the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and which no man shall take from us.

What we hold, therefore, is, that the leading principles thus laid down in Scripture regarding the organization and action of the Church, are the parity of the clergy, the right of the people, and the unity of the Church. With respect to these principles, two things

were asserted on the floor of the Assembly. First, that they are *jure divino*. That is, that they are clearly taught in the word of God, and intended to be of universal and perpetual obligation. By this is not meant either that they are essential to the being of the Church, for nothing can be essential to the Church which is not essential to salvation: nor is it meant that these principles may not, under certain circumstances, be less developed or called into action than in others. The right of the people, for example, to take part in the government of the Church, may be admitted, and yet the exercise of that right be limited by the ability to exercise it. We do not deny the right of the people in civil matters, when we deny the exercise of that right to minors, to felons, or to idiots. The other position assumed was, that the three principles just mentioned are the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism, in such sense as that those who hold those principles in their true intent are Presbyterians, and that those who deny them forfeit their claim to be so regarded.

That the above-mentioned principles are, in the sense stated, *jure divino*, may be proved, as we think, in very few words. If the Holy Spirit, as dwelling in the Church, is the source of its several prerogatives, it follows that there can be no offices in the Church, of divine authority, to which he does not call its members by imparting to them the appropriate gift. The apostle informs us, that the Spirit distributes his gifts to each one as he wills. Apart from those sanctifying influences common to all the children of God, by which they are incorporated into the body of Christ, he made some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Some had the gift of speaking with tongues, others the gift of healing, others the gift of miracles, others of government, others of helpers. Of these offices thus created, some were extraordinary and temporary, others permanent. Of those connected with the ministry of the word, were the apostles, prophets, and presbyters. The question, therefore, whether there is any permanent class or order of ministers higher than these presbyters, depends on the question, whether the apostolic and prophetic offices were permanent or temporary. It is admitted that in the apostolic Church the apostles and prophets were superior to presbyters. If, therefore, we have now apostles and prophets in the Church, then there are still two orders of the clergy above ordinary ministers. But if there are now no such offices, then the parity of the clergy is a necessary consequence. That the apostolic and prophetic offices were temporary, is rendered certain from the fact that the peculiar gifts which made an apostle or a prophet are no longer imparted. An apostle was a man endued with plenary knowledge of the gospel by immediate revelation, and who was rendered infallible in the communi-

cation of that knowledge by the gift of inspiration. A prophet was a man who received partial revelations and occasional inspiration.

It is not necessary that we should stop to prove that such were the gifts of the apostles and prophets. It is proved by the fact that they claimed them, that they exercised them, that their claim was divinely authenticated and universally admitted, and that the possession of those gifts was essential to their authority as teachers and rulers, to which all men were required to submit on the pain of perdition. It requires no proof that these gifts are no longer possessed by any order of men in the Church, and therefore it requires no further proof that the apostolic and prophetic offices are no longer extant. This conclusion as to the temporary nature of those offices is confirmed: 1. By the consideration that there is no command to continue them. 2. That there is no specification of the qualifications to be required in those who sought them. 3. That there is no record of their continuation. They disappeared from the stage of history as completely as the prophets, judges, and high priests of the Old Testament economy. On the other hand, the gifts of teaching and ruling, which constituted a presbyter, are continued; the command to ordain such officers is on record; their qualifications are minutely laid down; the account of their appointment is found in the Scripture, and they continue in unbroken succession wherever the Church is found. These presbyters are therefore the highest permanent officers of the Church for which we have any divine warrant. If the Church, for special reasons, sees fit to appoint any higher order, such as are found in bishops of the Lutheran Church in Europe, and in the superintendents, clothed with presbyterial power (*i. e.*, the powers of a presbytery,) in the early Church of Scotland, this is merely a human arrangement. The parity of the clergy is a matter of divine right. They all hold the same office, and have the same rights, so far as they depend on divine appointment.

As to the right of the people to take part in the government of the Church, this also is a divine right. This follows because the Spirit of God, who is the source of all power, dwells in the people, and not exclusively in the clergy; because we are commanded to submit ourselves to our brethren in the Lord; because the people are commanded to exercise this power, and are upbraided when unfaithful or negligent in the discharge of this duty; because the gift of governing or ruling is a permanent gift; and because, in the New Testament we find the brethren in the actual recognized exercise of the authority in question, which was never disputed in the Church until the beginning of the dark ages. This right of the people must, of necessity, be exercised through representatives. Although it might be possible in a small congregation for the brotherhood to act immediately, yet in such a city as Jerusalem,

where there were five or ten thousand believers, it was impossible that government or discipline should be administered by the whole body of Christians. And when the Churches of a province, or of a nation, or of all Christendom, united for the decision of questions of general interest, the people must appear by their representatives or not appear at all. Under the Old Testament, in the assembly or congregation of the people, in the Synagogue and in the Sanhedrim, this principle of representation was by divine appointment universally recognized. By like authority it was introduced into the Christian Church as a fundamental principle of its organization. This is the broad, scriptural *jure divino* foundation of the office of ruling elder, an officer who appears with the same credentials, and with equal authority as the minister in all our church-courts, from the session to the General Assembly. The third principle above-mentioned is the unity of the Church. This unity is not merely a union of faith and of communion; not merely a fellowship in the Spirit, but a union of subjection, so that one part is subject to a larger, and a larger to the whole. This also is *jure divino*. 1. Because the whole Church is made one by the indwelling of the Spirit. 2. Because we are commanded to be subject to our brethren. The ground of this subjection is not proximity in space, nor a mutual covenant or agreement, but the mere fact that they are our brethren, and, therefore, it extends to all brethren. 3. Because in the apostolic, as in the Old Testament Church, the whole body of professors of the true religion were thus united as one body. 4. Because by the instinct of Christian feeling the Church in all ages has striven after this union of subjection, and recognized its violation as inconsistent with the law of its constitution. This, again, by necessity and divine appointment is a representative union, and hence the provincial, national and œcumenical councils which mark the whole history of the Church. We hold, therefore, to a *jure divino* form of Church government, so far as these principles go.

The second position assumed in reference to the points above stated was, that those principles constitute the true idea of Presbyterianism. Dr. Thornwell's second speech was devoted to ridiculing and refuting that position. He objected to it as altogether illogical. It was a definition, he said, without any single distinctive characteristic of the subject. Let us look, he said, at these principles. 1st. Parity of the clergy. Why, sir, this is not a distinctive mark of Presbytery. All the evangelical sects except the Episcopal hold to it. 2d. The power of the people. That is not distinctive of Presbyterianism. The Congregationalists carry this further than we do. 3d. The unity of the Church. Is this peculiar to us? Is it a peculiar element of our system? Rome holds it with a vehemence which we do not insist upon.

"That Presbyterianism!" he exclaimed, "a little of everything and anything, but nothing distinctive."

This is extraordinary logic. And the more extraordinary, considering that Dr. Thornwell had just informed the Assembly that he had studied Aristotle, and every other great master of the science; that he had probably the largest private library of works in that department in the country, and felt prepared to measure swords on that field with any man alive. We do not question either his learning or his skill. We only know that the merest tyro, with logic or without it, can see the fallacy of his argument. He assumes that the only mode of definition is to state the genus of the subject and its specific difference. Thus we define God by saying that he is a Spirit, which states the genus, or class of beings to which he belongs; and we distinguish him from all other spirits by saying he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Another method, however, equally legitimate and equally common, is to enumerate the attributes of the subject which complete or individualize the idea. We may define man to be a rational creature, invested with a material body. Should any professor of logic ridicule this definition, and say it includes nothing distinctive, he would only show that his logic was in abeyance. Should he imitate Dr. Thornwell, he would say, "Rationality is no distinctive characteristic of man. God, angels, and demons are all rational. Neither is a dependent created nature such a characteristic. There are other creatures in the universe besides man. Nor is the possession of an organized body anything peculiar. Birds and beasts have bodies. Here, then, we have a little of everything and anything, and nothing peculiar. Is that a man?" Nevertheless, so long as, in the sphere of our knowledge, man is the only rational creature invested with a living body, the above definition is perfectly logical, all the followers of the Stagirite to the contrary notwithstanding. Now, as the principles above stated, the parity of the clergy, the right of the people to a substantive part in the government of the Church, and the subjection of one part of the Church to a larger, and a larger to the whole, are recognized by Presbyterians, and are not found among Papists, Prelatists, and Independents, or any other historical body of Christians, they are, in their combination, the characteristic or distinguishing features of the Presbyterian system.

Dr. Thornwell stated his own as an antagonistic theory of Presbyterianism. 1. That the Church is governed by representative assemblies. 2. Those assemblies include two houses, or two elements, the preaching and ruling elder. 3. The parity of the eldership, all elders, preaching and ruling, appearing in our Church courts with the same credentials, and having the same rights. 4. The unity of the Church, as realized in the representative principle.

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Every one of his four principles is involved in those stated on the other side. 1. The principle of representation, as we have seen, is of necessity included in the doctrine of the unity of the Church, and the subjection of a part to the whole. This theory can be carried out only through representative assemblies. 2. The union of two elements in these Church courts is also embraced in the assertion of the right of the people to take part in the government of the Church, for this right can only be exercised through their representatives sitting as constituent elements in ecclesiastical courts. 3. The parity of the elders and ministers in these representative assemblies, is also included in the one system as well as in others. 4. The unity of the Church was avowed on both sides, and was not claimed as peculiar to either. This is not an after thought. All these principles were presented years ago, in the tract, "What is Presbyterianism?" and shown to be involved in those which Dr. Thornwell repudiated as any just description of our system.

The true peculiarities of the new theory, Dr. Thornwell left out of view in his rejoinder. Those principles are, 1. A new doctrine concerning ruling elders. 2. The doctrine that all power in the Church is joint and not several. 3. That every thing not prescribed in Scripture is forbidden. We shall say a few words on each of these points in their order.

First, as to the eldership. There are only two radically different theories on this subject. According to the one, the ruling elder is a layman; according to the other, he is a clergyman. According to the former, he belongs to a different order from the minister, holds a different office, has a different vocation and ordination. He is not a bishop, pastor, or teacher, but officially a ruler. According to the latter, the reverse is true. The ruling elder belongs to the same order with the minister. He is a bishop, pastor, teacher, and ruler. This is all the minister is. They have, therefore, the same office, and differ only as to their functions, as a professor differs from a pastor, or a missionary from a settled minister. It is to be noticed that the point of difference between these theories is not the importance of the office of ruling elder, nor its divine warrant. According to both views, the office is *jure divino*. The Spirit who calls one man to be a minister calls another to be an elder. The one office is as truly from Christ as the other. Nor do the theories differ as to the parity of elders and ministers in our Church courts. Both enter those courts with the same credentials, and have the same right to sit, deliberate and determine. The vote of the one avails as much as that of the other. On

all these points, the theories agree. The point of difference between them which is radical, affecting the whole character of our system, relates to the nature of the office of the ruling elder. Is he a clergyman, a bishop? or is he a layman? Does he hold the same office with the minister, or a different one? According to the new theory the offices are identified. Everything said of presbyters in the New Testament, this theory applies equally to elders and ministers of the word. What constitutes identity of office, if it be not identity of official titles, of qualifications, of vocations, of duties, of ordinations? This new doctrine makes all elders, bishops, pastors, teachers, and rulers. It applies all directions as to the qualifications and duties, as to election and ordination of presbyters, as much to the ruling elder as to the minister of the word. It therefore destroys all official distinction between them. It reduces the two to one order, class, or office. The one has as much right to preach, ordain, and administer the sacraments, as the other. The conclusion cannot by any possibility be avoided on the theory that elders are pastors, bishops, and teachers, in the same sense with ministers.

The first objection to this theory is that it is entirely contrary to the doctrine and practice of all the Reformed Churches, and especially of our own. In those Churches the ruling elder is a layman. He has a different office from the minister. He has different gifts, different training, duties, prerogatives, and ordination. The one is ordained by the minister, the other by the Presbytery. The one ministers in the word and sacraments, the other does not. The one is appointed specially to teach and to preach the gospel; the other to take part in the discipline and government of the Church.

Secondly, in thus destroying the peculiarity of the office, its value is destroyed. It is precisely because the ruling elder is a layman, that he is a real power, a distinct element in our system. The moment you dress him in canonicals, you destroy his power, and render him ridiculous. It is because he is not a clergyman, it is because he is one of the people, engaged in the ordinary business of life, separated from the professional class of ministers, that he is what he is in our Church courts. Thirdly, This theory reduces the government of the Church to a clerical despotism. Dr. Thornwell ridiculed this idea. He called it an argument *ad captandum*. He said it was equal in absurdity to the argument of a hard-shell Baptist, who proved that his sect would universally prevail, from the text, "The voice of the turtle shall be heard in all the land." Turtles, said the Hard-shell, are to be seen sitting upon logs in all the streams, and as you pass, they plunge into the water, therefore, all men will do the same. Such, said Dr. Thornwell, was the logic of the brother from Princeton. What-

ever may be thought of the wit of this illustration, we cannot see that it proves much. Does it prove that all power in our Church is not in the hands of ministers and elders? and if elders and ministers are all alike bishops and teachers, all of the same order, all clergymen, does it not follow that all power is in the hands of the clergy? But, says Dr. Thornwell, the people choose these elders. What of that? Suppose slaves had a right to choose (under a veto,) their own masters, would they not be slaves still? If, according to the Constitution of the United States, the President, senators, representatives, heads of departments, judges, marshals, all naval and military men holding commissions, in short, all officers from the highest to the lowest, (except overseers of the poor,) must be clergymen, every one would see and feel that all power was in the hands of the clergy. It would avail little that the people choose these clergymen, if the clergy had the sole right to ordain, that is, to admit into their order. All power, legislative, executive, and judicial, would be in their hands, the right of election notwithstanding. This is the government which the new theory would introduce into the Church. This doctrine is, therefore, completely revolutionary. It deprives the people of all substantive power. The legislative, judicial, and executive power, according to our system, is in Church courts, and if these courts are to be composed entirely of clergymen, and are close, self-perpetuating bodies, then we have, or we should have, as complete a clerical domination as the world has ever seen. It need hardly be said that our fathers, and especially the late Dr. Miller, did not hold any such doctrine as this. There was no man in the Church more opposed to this theory than that venerable man, whose memory we have so much reason to cherish with affectionate reverence. We do not differ from Dr. Miller as to the nature of the office of the ruling elder. The only point of difference between him and us relates to the method of establishing the divine warrant for the office. He laid stress on one argument, we on another. That is all. As to the importance, nature, and divine institution of the office, we are faithful to his instructions.

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It is only as to the point just indicated that we could sanction dissent from the teachings of our venerated and lamented colleague.

Dr. Thornwell himself, in the last extremity, said that he did not hold the new theory. Then he has no controversy with us, nor we with him, so far as the eldership is concerned. The dispute is reduced to a mere logomachy, if the only question is, whether the ruling elder is a presbyter. Dr. Thornwell asked, If he is not a presbyter, what right has he in the Presbytery? You might as well, he said, put any other good man there. It is on all sides admitted that in the New

Testament the presbyters are bishops—how then are we to avoid the conclusion that the ruling elder is a bishop, and therefore the same in office as the minister, and the one as much a clergyman as the other? This is the dilemma in which, as we understood, Dr. Thornwell endeavoured to place Dr. Hodge, when he asked him, on the floor of the Assembly, whether he admitted that the elder was a presbyter. Dr. Hodge rejoined by asking Dr. Thornwell whether he admitted that the apostles were deacons. He answered, No. But, says Dr. Hodge, Paul says he was a διάκονος. O, says Dr. Thornwell, that was in the general sense of the word. Precisely so. If the answer is good in the one case, it is good in the other. If the apostles being deacons in the wide sense of the word, does not prove that they were officially deacons, then that elders are presbyters in the one sense, does not prove them to be presbyters in the other sense. We hold, with Calvin, that the official presbyters of the New Testament were bishops; for, as he says, "*Quicumque verbi ministerio funguntur, iis titulum episcoporum* [*Scriptura*] *tribuit.*" But of the ruling elders, he adds, "*Gubernatores fuisse existimo seniores ex plebe delectos, qui censuræ morum et exercendæ disciplinæ una cum episcopis præessent.*" *Institutio*, &c. IV. 3. 8. This is the old, healthful, conservative doctrine of the Presbyterian Church. Ministers of the word are clergymen, having special training, vocation, and ordination; ruling elders are laymen, chosen from the people as their representatives, having, by divine warrant, equal authority in all Church courts with the ministers.

The second point of difference between the new and old theories of Presbyterianism is, that all power in the Church is joint, and not several. The objection to this doctrine is simply to the word *all.* It is admitted, and always has been admitted, that the ordinary exercise of the legislative, executive, and judicial authority of the Church, is in Church courts; according to our system, in Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and Assembly. About this there is no dispute. But, on the other hand, it is contended, that according to the theory and practice of our own, and of all other Presbyterian bodies, ordination to the sacred office confers the power or authority not only to preach the gospel, but to collect and organize Churches, to administer the sacraments, and in the absence of a session, to decide on the qualifications of candidates for admission to those ordinances; and when need be, to ordain, as is done in the case of ruling elders. This is a power which our ministers and missionaries have, and always must exercise. It can never be denied by any who are not the slaves, instead of being the masters of logic. On this point it is not necessary to enlarge.

The third point of difference between the two systems is the extent to which the liberty of the Church extends in matters of government

and modes of operation. According to the old, and especially the genuine American form of Presbyterianism, while it is admitted that there is a form of government prescribed or instituted in the New Testament, so far as its general principles or features are concerned, there is a wide discretion allowed us by God, in matters of detail, which no man or set of men, which neither civil magistrates nor ecclesiastical rulers, can take from us. This is part of that liberty with which Christ has made us free, and in which we are commanded to stand fast. The other doctrine is the opposite of this. It is, that every thing that is lawful as to the mode in which the Church is to be organized, and as to the methods which she is to adopt in carrying on her work, is laid down in Scripture. It is not enough that it is not forbidden; it is not enough that it is in accordance with the principles laid down in the word of God. Unless it is actually commanded, unless we can put our finger on a "Thus saith the Lord," in its support, it is unlawful. God, it was said, has given the Church a particular organization, a definite number of offices, courts, organs, agencies; and for us to introduce any other, or even any new combinations, is an indignity to him, and to his word. On this ground, as we have said, the Boards were pronounced unscriptural. Their abrogation was made a matter of duty. It was urged upon our conscience as demanded by our allegiance to God. It is our firm belief that there were not six men in the Assembly who held this doctrine. There were sixty who voted for some organic change in the Boards, but so far as we know, there were only two who took the ground of this superlative high-churchism. It is utterly repugnant to the spirit of the New Testament, to the practice of the Church universal, to the whole character of Protestantism, and especially of our Presbyterianism; it is so preposterous and suicidal, that we have no more fear of its prevalence among us, than that the freemen of this country will become the advocates of the divine right of kings. We have no intention of discussing this question at length, which we deem altogether unnecessary. We shall content ourselves with a few remarks on two aspects of the case.

In the first place, this theory never has been, nor can be carried out, even by its advocates. Consistency would require them to repudiate all organizations, not Boards only, but Committees also, and confine the joint agency of the Church to Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies. They hold these only to be divinely instituted organs for joint action. And it is perfectly clear that if these be departed from, or if other agencies be adopted, the whole principle is given up. Accordingly, the first ground assumed by the advocates of the new theory, was that missionary operations could be carried on only by the Presbyteries. The law of God was said to forbid every-

thing else. When this was found impracticable, then it was discovered that a board or court of deacons, was the divinely instituted agency, and the word of God was made to forbid any other. This, however, would not go. Then followed other discoveries, and at last it was found out that a committee was the thing. God permits a committee, but to institute a board is an act of rebellion. But what is the difference? A committee is no more commanded than a board. The one is as much a delegated body as the other. Both continue as a living organism after the Assembly appointing them is dissolved and dead. We were referred to the Committee of Church Extension as an illustration of the radical difference between the two organizations. The only difference, however, is that one is larger than the other. There is not a single principle involved in the one, which is not involved also in the other.

It may be said, and it was said in the last extremity, that an executive committee appointed directly by the Assembly, is a simpler device than a board, and that the Church is limited in her choice of agencies to what is absolutely necessary. But, in the first place, this is an admission that everything necessary is not prescribed in Scripture which is contrary to the theory. In the second place, the Committee of Church Extension, which was held up as the model, is not the simplest possible, by a great deal. A single executive officer is a simpler device than an executive committee, and much more so than a committee of thirty or forty members. In the third place, when it is said we are forbidden to adopt any means not absolutely necessary, the question arises, Necessary for what? For doing the work? or, for doing it in the best and most effectual manner. If the latter, which is the only rational view of the matter, then again the whole principle is abandoned; for it must rest with the judgment of the Church to decide what measures are best adapted for her purpose, and this is all the discretion any body desires. It is obvious that the principle advocated by these brethren is one which they themselves cannot carry out. The Church is getting tired of such hair-splitting. She is impatient of being harassed and impeded in her great operations by such abstractions. If, however, the principle in question could be carried out, what would be the consequence? Of course we could have no Church-schools, colleges, or theological seminaries; no appliances for the education of the heathen, such as all Churches have found it necessary to adopt. The boards of directors of our Seminaries must be given up. No one pretends that they are commanded in Scripture, or that they are absolutely necessary to the education of the ministry. We had educated ministers before Seminaries were thought of. So far as we heard, not a word was said in the Assembly in answer to this *argumen-*

tum ad hominem. The brethren who denounced the Board of Missions as unscriptural, had nothing to say against the boards of the Seminaries. Any one sees, however, that if the one is unlawful, the others must be.

The grand objection urged against this new theory, the one which shows it to be not only inconsistent and impracticable, but intolerable, was, that it is, in plain English, nothing more or less than a device for clothing human opinions with divine authority. The law of God was made to forbid not only what it says, but what may be inferred from it. We grant that what a man infers from the word of God binds his own conscience. But the trouble is, that he insists that it shall bind mine also. We begged to be excused. No man may make himself the lord of my conscience, much less will any man be allowed to make himself lord of the conscience of the Church. One man infers one thing, another a different, from the Bible. The same man infers one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow. Must the Church bow her neck to all these burdens? She would soon be more trammelled than the Church in the wilderness, with this infinite difference, the Church of old was measurably restricted by fetters which God himself imposed; the plan now is to bind her with fetters which human logic or caprice forges. This she will never submit to.

Dr. Thornwell told us that the Puritans rebelled against the doctrine that what is not forbidden in Scripture is allowable. It was against the theory of liberty of discretion, he said, our fathers raised their voices and their arms. We always had a different idea of the matter. We supposed that it was in resistance to this very doctrine of inferences they poured out their blood like water. In their time, men inferred from Romans xiii. 1, ("Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation,") the doctrine of passive submission. From the declaration and command of Christ: "The Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do," they inferred the right of the Church to make laws to bind the conscience. On this ground tories and high-church men sought to impose on the Church their trumpery vestments, and their equally frivolous logical deductions. It was fetters forged from inferences our fathers broke, and we, their children, will never suffer them to be rewelded. There is as much difference between this extreme doctrine of divine right, this idea that everything is forbidden which is not commanded, as there is between this free, exultant Church of ours, and the mummied forms of mediæval Christianity. We have no fear on this subject. The doctrine need only be clearly propounded to be rejected.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND PRESBYTERIAN ORDERS. [*]

THE question, whether the Church of England recognizes the validity of the orders of non-episcopal Churches, is one which concerns it much more than it does them. They are not the worse for non-recognition. They are not thereby curtailed of any spiritual power or advantage. They enter no claim to be regarded by Romanists or Anglicans, as constituent portions of the Church visible and catholic. They can as well afford to have their Church standing denied, as the United States could bear to have their national existence called in question.

The case is far different with the Church of England itself. To refuse to recognize those as Christians who are Christians; to refuse communion with those in whom Christ dwells by his Spirit; to unchurch the living members of Christ's body; to withhold sympathy, fellowship, and co-operation from those in whom Christ delights, and who are devoted to his service; to take sides in the great conflict, between true and false religion, between the gospel and ritualism, against the truth and against God's people, is a very great sin. It is the sin of schism which all Churchmen profess to regard with special abhorrence. It supposes wrong views of the nature of the Church, of the plan of salvation, and of the nature of religion. We do not wonder, therefore, that the evangelical spiritual members of that Church are anxious not only to free themselves from the imputation of this sin and heresy, but to prove that the Church to which they belong is not justly chargeable with either.

This, to say the least, is not a work of supererogation. There is much to render plausible the charge in question. Not only is the schismatical principle of making episcopal ordination essential to the ministry, and a valid ministry essential to the being of the Church, to the efficacy of the sacraments, and to union with Christ, the avowed doctrine of a large and controlling portion of the Anglican Church in England and in this country, but that Church, as a Church, stands

[* Article, same title, reviewing "*A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Church of England on the Validity of the Orders of the Scotch and Foreign Non-Episcopal Churches.*" By W. Goode, M. A., F. S. A., Rector of Allhallows the Great and Less.—*Princeton Review*, 1854, p. 377.]

isolated in the Christian world. It is excommunicated by Rome, and it in its turn refuses official recognition of other Protestants. An Episcopal minister communing in a Presbyterian Church, would, in our days, be almost as rare a sight as a Romish priest communing with the Church of England. The difference between the relation of the Episcopal clergy to those of other Protestant Churches, and of the clergy of those Churches to each other, is palpable. Mutual recognition, in the latter case, is open, cordial, and undoubted; in the other, it is always dubious and hesitating, and often explicitly denied. That Church, therefore, as a Church, stands aloof. It has no practical communion with other Churches. It rebaptizes, in many cases, Presbyterian children, and reordains Presbyterian clergymen. It sends no corresponding members from its Conventions, either state or general, to the Synods or Assemblies of any other Church. It does not invite the ministers of other denominations to minister in its pulpits, or to take part in its religious services. It draws a distinct and broad line of demarcation between itself and all other Protestant bodies. We are speaking of the acknowledged and unquestioned *animus* and *status* of the Church as a body. We know there are hundreds of her ministers, and thousands of her people, who have none of this spirit, and to whom the exclusiveness of their ecclesiastical canons is a burden and an offence. We know that many cases have occurred in which this exclusiveness has been triumphed over, and Episcopal churches *lent* to Presbyterian ministers. We know, too, that this isolation of the Church of England is inconsistent with the avowed principles of her own standards, and contrary to the spirit and practice of her Reformers and immediate successors for a hundred years. Nevertheless it is a fact. There must therefore be something in her constitution which tends to exclusiveness, and which leads her thus to stand aloof from the great body of Evangelical Christians. This can hardly be merely Episcopacy; because the Moravians, and some Lutheran Churches, are episcopal, and yet are completely identified with other Protestant communions. Neither can it be either the use of a Liturgy, or its peculiar character; because other Protestant Churches have liturgies, and some of them less evangelical than that of the Church of England. The isolation of that Church is no doubt to be referred, in a measure, to the outward course of her history; to her having been framed and fashioned by the king and parliament, established by the law of the land, and made the exclusive recipient of the wealth and honours of the State. But besides these outward circumstances, there must be something in the system itself, some element essentially anti-Protestant and exclusive, to which the effect in question is principally to be referred. This, we doubt not, is in general, the subordination of truth to

form; the making what is outward more important than what is inward. The question how a company of Christians is organized; what is their form of government; what their mode of worship; what their ecclesiastical descent, is of far more consequence in determining the question whether they are to be recognized as a Church, and to be communed with, and regarded as Christian brethren, members of the body of Christ, than either their faith or practice. If a body of professing Christians is organized in a certain way, it is a Church, no matter whether it is as heretical and idolatrous as Rome, or as ignorant and superstitious as the Greeks or Abyssinians. If organized in a different way, it is no Church, it has no ministry, no sacraments, and no part in the covenant of mercy. This is the legitimate consequence of the idea of the Church on which the whole Anglican system is founded. The Church is regarded as an external society, with a definite organization, perpetuated by a regular succession of ordinations. Of course, in searching for the Church, the search is not for truth and holiness, but for organization and succession. Hence, Rome is a Church, because she has prelates and succession; the Free Church of Scotland is no Church, because it has no bishops. The one is indeed heretical, schismatical, and idolatrous, the mystical Babylon; the other, one of the most orthodox, exemplary, and devoted body of Christians in the world. Still, the former is our Latin sister, whose orders and sacraments are valid and efficacious; the other is an apostate communion, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenant of promise, forming no part of the Church catholic and apostolical. There is not only more of outward recognition, but of inward cordial sympathy and fellowship with prelatical Churches, no matter how corrupt, than with non-episcopal Churches, no matter how pure. The form is made of more importance than the substance. Such is the necessary consequence of making the Church an external society, and prelatical ordination essential to the ministry. This is the element which has been infused into the Episcopal Church of England and America, and which has produced its legitimate fruit in the isolation of that body from other Protestant communions. Though not original in its constitution, it is so congenial with it, that it has ever been adopted by a large portion of its members, and its influence can hardly be resisted even by those who see its unscriptural character, and are shocked by its legitimate effects.

There are certain radical points bearing on this whole subject, incorporated in all Protestant confessions, the denial of which is a denial of Protestantism, and the ignoring of which, on the part of any Church, necessarily leads that Church into an unnatural and anti-Protestant position. One of these, as just intimated, relates to the idea of the

Church. All Protestant Churches rejected the Popish doctrine, that the Church is, in its essential nature, an external society, and especially that it is such a society organized in any one definite form. Every confession framed at the time of the Reformation defined the Church as the body of Christ, to be the company of believers, the *coetus sanctorum*, the company of faithful men; or, as the doctrine is expressed in the Westminster Confession, "The Catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered in one, under Christ, the head thereof, and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all." By this is meant that the body to which belong the attributes, prerogatives, and promises pertaining to the Church, consists of true believers. And this is only saying that the characteristics, prerogatives, and promises, which, according to the Scriptures, belong to Christians, pertain not to the nominal, but to the real disciples of Christ; and whatever of absurdity and evil is consequent on confounding the distinction between nominal and real Christians, is inseparable from making the external Church, a body of professed believers, the possessor of the attributes and prerogatives of the true Church. The great corruption, apostasy, assumption, and tyranny of Rome consisted in appropriating to herself, as an external society, the attributes and powers of the body of Christ; and the leading Protest of those who rejected her authority was directed against that all-comprehending assumption, and consisted in the affirmation that the true Church was composed of true believers, and that every man united to Christ by a living faith was a member of his body and an heir of his salvation, no matter what his external ecclesiastical relations might be, and despite of all that pope, prelate, or presbyter, might say or do.

This is one fundamental principle of Protestantism. A second, scarcely less important, is, that the visible Church catholic consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion, together with their children, and that particular Churches consist of any number of such professing Christians, together with their children, united together for the maintenance and protection of the truth, and mutual watch and care. A particular Church may be one worshipping assembly, or any number of such congregations collectively considered as united under some one tribunal.* The obvious meaning of this definition of the visible Church is, that as true believers constitute the true Church, so professed believers constitute the apparent or visible Church;

* *Ecclesia visibilis est vel universalis, omnium Christianorum societas, nullo quidem fœdere externo juncta, ex iisdem tamen originibus nata, notisque communibus ab alienigenis diversa; vel particularis, singularis Christianorum societas, externo fœdere juncta.*

and consequently, the question, whether any external organized body, or particular Church, is to be recognized and treated as a constituent member of the visible Church catholic, depends on the question, not whether they are organized in this or that particular way, nor whether they are derived by regular descent from the apostles, but simply and solely whether they profess the true religion. The second great question, therefore, between Protestants and Romanists, in reference to this whole subject, relates to the *criteria* or marks by which we are to determine whether any particular Church is really a constituent portion of the visible catholic Church. The Protestant confessions, without exception, declare the word and sacraments, or simply the word, *i. e.*, the profession of the true religion, to be that criterion.* As among nations there may be good and bad governments, that is, political institutions more or less in accordance with the principles of right and with the revealed will of God, yet every independent state, no matter what its political organization may be, whether a pure despotism or a pure democracy, is entitled to be received into the family of nations; so every organized body professing the true religion and associated for the maintenance of the truth, and for the worship of God, is entitled to be recognized as a part of the true visible Church. Protestants have ever acted on this principle, and they must do so, or forfeit their character and their spiritual life. The Churches of Switzerland, of France, of the Palatinate, of Saxony, of Holland, of Sweden, of England, of Scotland, had each their own peculiar mode of organization or form of government; yet each recognized all the rest. If a body professed the true religion, it was received into the sisterhood of Churches, whether it was Erastian, Prelatical, Presbyterian, or Congregational. The only Church which has stammered and faltered in this matter, is the Church of England, which has always acted as though it was at least an act of condescension or concession, to recognize non-Episcopal denominations

* The Protestant confessions generally make the word and sacraments the criterion of a Church, and sometimes, as in the Westminster Confession, it is simply the word. On this point Turrettin says:—"*Quamvis autem in assignandis veræ ecclesiæ notis quædam in verbis occurrat diversitas inter orthodoxos, in reipsa tamen est consensus. Nam sive unica dicatur, doctrinæ scilicet veritas et conformitas cum Dei verbo, sive plures, pura scilicet verbi prædicatio, cum legitima sacramentorum administratione, quibus alii addunt disciplinæ exercitium, et sanctitatem vitæ seu obedientiam verbo præstitam, res eodem redit. . . . Porro observandum circa notas istas diversos esse necessitatis gradus, et alias aliis magis necessarias esse. In primo gradu necessitatis est pura verbi prædicatio et professio, utpote sine qua ecclesia esse non potest. Sed non parvum habet necessitatis gradum sacramentorum administratio, quæ ita ex priore pendet, ut abesse tamen ad tempus possit, ut visum in ecclesia Israelitica in deserto quæ caruit circumcisione; eadem est disciplinæ ratio, quæ ad tuendum ecclesiæ statum pertinet, sed qua sublata vel corrupta non statim tollitur ecclesia.*" Vol. iii. p. 98.

as true Churches. The subjective reason for this faltering has been the dread of detracting from the importance of the Episcopate. If admitted less than essential, the fear was, it might be utterly disregarded. The objective reason, as before stated, is to be found in the doctrine so congenial to her system, that external organization enters into the essence of the Church.

The Protestant doctrine which makes the profession of the true religion the only essential criterion of the Church, is neither arbitrary nor optional. It is necessary and obligatory. We must hold it, and must act upon it, or set ourselves in direct opposition to the word of God. It arises necessarily out of the undeniable scriptural principle, that nothing can be essential to the Church but what is essential to salvation. This principle is held alike by Romanists and Protestants. It is because the former regard baptism and submission to the pope as necessary to salvation, that they make them necessary to the Church; and it is because Anglicans hold there can be no salvation without communion with bishops, that they hold there can be no Church without a bishop. So long, therefore, as Protestants hold that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only indispensable condition of salvation, they must hold that faith is the only essential condition of the being of the Church. To make anything else essential is to alter the conditions of salvation; and to alter the conditions of salvation is the greatest act of presumption, folly, and wickedness of which sinful worms can well be guilty.

It follows necessarily from what has been said, that by "the profession of the true religion" as the criterion of the Church, is meant the profession of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Unless the Bible teaches that the knowledge and belief of all the doctrines contained in the word of God, are essential to salvation, it cannot be assumed to teach that the profession of all those doctrines is essential to the existence of the Church. No man believes the former of these propositions, and therefore no man can consistently believe the latter. We are bound to recognize as a Christian any man who gives satisfactory evidence of piety, and who professes his faith in the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, even though he be ignorant or erroneous as to non-essential points. In like manner, the question whether any body of Christians is to be recognized as a Church, does not depend upon its being free from error, but upon its professing the doctrines essential to salvation.*

* Romanists objected to this criterion of the Church, that the common people are not competent judges of doctrines. To this Protestants replied—*Agitur hic de examine non cujusvis doctrinæ, et quæstionum omnium, quæ circa eam moveri possunt sed tantum doctrinæ necessariæ ad salutem, in qua essentia fidei consistit, quæ per-*

It need hardly be said that in making the true religion the only essential condition of the Church, and in limiting the demand to fundamental doctrines, Protestants do not intend that other things are unrevealed or unimportant. They readily admit that much is revealed and enjoined in Scripture, which, though not essential to salvation, is necessary to the perfection of Christian character, and to the well being and purity of the Church. But as perfection is not necessary in the individual to substantiate his claim to be regarded as a Christian, so neither is a perfectly scriptural creed or form of government necessary to the being of the Church, or to the existence of an obligation on our part to recognize it as such.

If it be asked, what is involved in this recognition? the answer is easy. To recognize a man as a Christian, is to admit his right to be so regarded and treated; it is to feel and act towards him as a Christian, and to acknowledge that he has all the rights and privileges of a Christian. In like manner, to recognize a body of men as a Church, is, 1. To admit their right to be so regarded and treated. 2. It is to feel and act towards them as a constituent part of the visible Church catholic; and 3. It is to acknowledge that they have all the rights and privileges which belong to a Church of Jesus Christ. That is, that they have a right to receive members into the communion of the Church, or to exclude them from it; to administer the sacraments, to ordain and depose ministers, and, in short, to do everything which Christ has commissioned his Church to do.

If it be asked further, whether all other Churches are bound to recognize and give effect to the acts of every body which they recognize as a sister Church, that is a very different question. It is the confusion of these two things, although so distinct, which alarms some conservative minds, and leads them to renounce the simplest principles of Protestantism. They fear that if they recognize a certain body as a Church, they must receive all their members, give effect to all their acts of discipline, recognize their ministers as their own, &c. This is a great mistake. We may recognize Austria as a nation, and yet not regard her sentence of banishment on one of her citizens for holding republican principles as binding on us. We may regard the Seceders as a Church, and yet not be bound to refuse communion with those whom they may excommunicate or depose for singing our hymns, or uniting in our worship. It is one thing to recognize the possession of certain rights by a particular body, and another to endorse the wisdom or the propriety of the exercise of those rightful powers in any given

spicue exstat in Scriptura, et potest a quolibet fideli percipi.—Turrettin, vol. iii. p. 106.

case. As we are not arguing, but simply stating what are the first principles of Protestantism on this whole subject, we cannot enter further into details, or attempt to specify the cases when one Church is bound to recognize the acts of another as though they were its own. This would require a treatise; our present object is far more limited. We wish merely to state those principles which have in fact led all evangelical Churches to recognize each other as constituent members of the Church universal, and the neglect or denial of which has led to the isolation of the Church of England from other Protestant communions.

It is easy to see the intimate connection between the principles above stated, and the whole system of evangelical religion and doctrine. If any one form of external organization or mode of ordination be essential to the Church, it must be essential to religion; and if necessary to religion, it must be the exclusive channel of grace and salvation. This is the essential feature of Ritualism. These two things are historically as well as logically related. To whatever extent any body make prelacy and episcopal orders essential to the being or well being of the Church, to the same extent have they also made them essential to piety, and regarded them as the channels of grace. It is not, therefore, anything merely adventitious to Protestantism, but something which arises out of its very nature, when it teaches that the profession of the true religion, or sound doctrine, is the only necessary condition of the being of the Church; and, therefore, that we are bound to regard as Christian Churches all those bodies which profess the true religion, no matter what their external organization may be.

A third distinctive principle of Protestantism relates to the ministry. On this subject all the Protestant Confessions teach,

1. That there is no such distinction between the clergy and laity as the Romish Church affirms. The former do not constitute a distinct class, separated by internal and indelible peculiarities of eminence from their fellow Christians, and exalted over them, not merely in office but by inward grace.

2. Those Confessions teach the universal priesthood of believers; that through Christ all have liberty of access by the Spirit unto the Father; and consequently that Christian ministers are not priests intervening between the people and God, as though through them and their ministrations alone we can become partakers of the benefits of redemption. The people do not come to God through the clergy as their mediators, nor are they dependent on them for grace and salvation; and therefore it is not the vital question with them, whether their clergy have the true succession and the grace of orders. "*Hinc patet,*" says the venerable Turrettin, "*ecclesiam non esse propter ministerium, sed*

ministerium propter ecclesiam, et ecclesiam non pendere a ministerio; sed ministerium ab ecclesia." Vol. iii., p. 253.

3. Protestants unite in teaching that all Church power vests radically not in the clergy as a class, but in the Church as a whole. In other words, that the great commission by which the Church was constituted, by which its powers were defined and conveyed, and its duties as well as its prerogatives determined, was addressed and given not to the clergy as a class, but to the whole Church. The power of the keys, therefore, vests ultimately or primarily in the people; of which power they can never rightfully divest themselves. In the articles of Smalcald, Luther, expressing the common doctrine of Protestants, says: "*Necesse est fateri, quod claves non ad personam unius hominis, sed ad Ecclesiam pertineant. Nam Christus de clavibus dicens*, Matt. xviii. 19, *addit: Ubicunque duo vel tres consenserint etc. Tribuit igitur principaliter claves Ecclesiæ, et immediate.*" In the same document, he says: "*Ubicunque est Ecclesia, ibi est jus administrandi evangelii. Quare necesse est, Ecclesiam retinere jus vocandi, eligendi et ordinandi ministros.*"

Turrettin, in speaking of the right to call men to the ministry, says: "*Nostra sententia est, jus vocationis ad ecclesiam* ORIGINALITER ET RADICALITER *pertinere, apud quam illam deposuit Christus.*" This he proves first, "A TRADITIONE CLAVIUM; *quia ecclesiis data est potestas clavium, quæ in se complectitur jus vocationis. Patet ex* Matt. xvi. 19, *ubi claves regni cœlorum promittuntur Petro, et in ejus persona toti ecclesiæ, et* Matt. xviii. 18, *Christus dat ecclesiæ potestatem ligandi et solvendi:* Vol. iii. 251. *Licet corpus ecclesiæ exercitium juris vocandi pastores commiserit Presbyterio ad vitandam confusionem; non ideo se absolute et simpliciter eo jure spoliavit, ut dicatur eo carere nec possit amplius in ullo casu eo uti. Quia ita commisit juris illius exercitium Rectoribus, qui nomine suo illud administrant, ut illud tamen originaliter tanquam sibi proprium et peculiare reservarit. Nec exemplum societatis civilis huc pertinet, ubi populus ita resignat jus suum Principi, quem eligit, ut eo absolute et simpliciter exuatur. Quia longe hac in parte differt societas politica et sacra. In illa populus potest resignare absolute jus suum principi, illi se subjiciendo, ut Domino. Sed ecclesia jus suum non transfert pastoribus quoad proprietatem tanquam dominis, sed tantum quoad usum et exercitium tanquam ministris, qui illud administrent, non proprio nomine, sed nomine ecclesiæ. Ratio discriminis est, quod in societate civili, ubi agitur tantum de bonis temporalibus, nihil obstat quominus populus possit resignare absolute jus suum, imo expedit aliquando ad vitandam confusionem et anarchiam. Sed in ecclesia ubi agitur de salute, fideles non possunt sine crimine absolute se exuere jure illo, quod habent in media, quæ illi dantur ad promovendam salutem suam,*

quale est ministerium. Licet enim fides et pietas ipsorum non absolute pendeat a pastoribus, tamen exercitium ministerii, quod purum est et integrum, magno est ad pietatem adjumento, et contra fidei conservatio difficillima est in corrupto ministerio." Vol. iii. p. 260.

This doctrine, that Church power vests not in the clergy as a class, but ultimately in the people, does not imply that the ministry is not an office, as the Quakers teach; nor that it is not an office of divine appointment. Neither does it imply that any man may of his own motion assume the office, and undertake the exercise of its functions, any more than the doctrine that all power in the State vests ultimately in the people, implies that any man may assume the office of a magistrate of his own will. Neither does the doctrine in question at all favour the theory of the Independents. That theory rests mainly on two principles, both of which we regard as manifestly unscriptural. The one is that which the name implies, viz., that each congregation or organized worshipping assembly is independent of all other churches; and the other is, that the ministerial office may be conveyed and withdrawn by the vote and at the option of the people. The function of the people is not to confer the office, but to join in the exercise of a judgment whether a given person is called of God to be a minister, and to decide whether he shall exercise his office over them, as their spiritual guide.

But while the doctrine in question teaches neither Quakerism nor Independency, it is none the less one of the radical principles of Protestantism. The Reformers protested not less against the Romish doctrine of the ministry, than they did against the Romish doctrine of the Church; the two being inseparably connected. They protested against the doctrine that Christ gave the Holy Spirit to the apostles as a permanent class of officers in the Church, to be by them transmitted by the imposition of their hands to their successors, and through them conveyed in ordination to presbyters, imparting to them grace and supernatural power. According to this theory, the grace and power which constitute a man a minister, and which authorize and enable him to execute ministerial functions efficaciously to the salvation of men, are derived solely from the hands of the ordaining bishop. Without such ordination, therefore, no man can be a minister. He can have neither the authority nor the power to discharge its functions. A failure in succession is of necessity a failure in the ministry, and a failure in the ministry is a failure in the Church. In opposition to all this, the Reformers taught that while the Holy Ghost is the fountain of all Church power, the Spirit is not given to the bishops as a class, but to the Church as a whole. He dwells in all believers, and thereby unites them in one as the body of Christ. To them he divides,

to each severally as he wills; giving to one the gift of wisdom, to another the gift of knowledge, to another that of teaching, to another that of ruling. Every office in the Church presupposes a gift, and is but the organ through which that gift is legitimately exercised for edification. It is, therefore, this inward call of the Holy Ghost which constitutes, in a manner, a minister; that is, which gives him the authority and ability to exercise its functions for the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. The fact that a man has this inward call, must be duly authenticated. This authentication may be either extraordinary or ordinary. The extraordinary authentication may be given either in the form of miracles, or in such a measure of the gifts of the ministry and such a degree of success as places the fact of a divine call beyond all reasonable doubt. No Protestant questions the call of Calvin and Farel to the work of the ministry, and no Protestant cares to ask for any authentication of that call beyond the approbation God so abundantly manifested. But in all ordinary cases the authentication of the inward divine call is by the judgment of the Church. There is a right and a wrong, a regular and an irregular way of expressing this judgment; but the main thing is the judgment itself. The orderly scriptural method of expressing the judgment of the Church, is through its official organ, that is, the Presbytery. Ordination is the public, solemn attestation of the judgment of the Church that the candidate is called of God to the ministry of reconciliation; which attestation authorizes his entrance on the public discharge of his duties.

It is on these principles the Reformers answered the objections by which they were constantly assailed. When the Romanists objected that the Reformers had no valid call to the ministry, they answered, *ad hominem*, that many of them had been regularly ordained in the Romish Church; and, as to others, that they had the call of God duly authenticated both by the extraordinary manifestations of his approbation and by the judgment of the Church.

When it was further objected, that any man might claim to have the call of God, and thus the door would be open to all manner of confusion and fanaticism, as among the Anabaptists, they made two answers; first, that a great distinction must be made between an orderly and settled state of the Church, and times of general corruption and confusion. As in a State, in ordinary times, there is a regular and prescribed method for the appointment of magistrates, which it would be a sin and evil to disregard, but when the magistrates turn tyrants or traitors, the people resume their rights and appoint their magistrates in their own way; so in the ordinary condition of the Church all are bound to abide by the regular and appointed methods of action;

but if the rulers of the Church become heretical and oppressive, the people have the right to renounce their authority, and to follow those who they see are called of God to the ministry.

When it was still further urged that this was to do away with the ministry as a divine institution, and to make it a mere creation of the Church, and supposed the people to have the power to make and depose ministers at their pleasure, it was answered, that the Protestant doctrine and practice were indeed inconsistent with the Romish theory of the ministry, which supposed that orders are a sacrament, that the Holy Ghost, conveying both authority and supernatural power, is communicated by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, and can be communicated in no other way. This rendered the Church entirely dependent on the ministry, by making grace and salvation dependent on an uninterrupted succession of valid ordinations. But this view of the nature of the ministry was declared to be unscriptural and destructive. On the other hand, it was denied that the Protestant doctrine conflicted with any thing taught in the word of God on the subject, or with the practice and faith of the Church in its purest ages. It was admitted that the ministry was a divine institution; that ministers receive their authority from Christ, and act in his name and as his representatives; that the people do not confer the office, but simply judge whether a candidate is called by God to be a minister; that in the expression of this judgment, those already in the ministry must, in ordinary cases, concur; and that to them, as in all other matters connected with the word and sacraments, belongs as the organs or executive officers of the Church, the right to carry the judgment of the Church into effect, *i. e.*, to them belongs the right to ordain. At the same time, however, they maintained two important principles, perfectly consistent with this view of the ministry as a divine institution, the appropriate organ of the Church for the examination and ordination of candidates for the sacred office. The one was that already referred to as so clearly expressed by Luther when he said, "*Ubicunque est ecclesia, ibi est jus administrandi evangelii;*" and therefore, if we acknowledge any body of men as a Church, we must admit their right to take their own course in the election and ordination of ministers. We may believe, as the great body of Christians do believe, that there is a right and a wrong, a regular and an irregular, a scriptural and an unscriptural method of proceeding in this matter. But as no Protestant believes that any thing connected with such externals is essential to salvation or to the being of the Church, he cannot, on the ground of any such irregularity, refuse to acknowledge an organized body of the professors of the true religion as a true Church or their ministers as true ministers. Hence, although in the great Protestant

body one class believed that bishops were the only appropriate organs of the Church in ordination; another considered the Presbytery was, according to the Scriptures, the appointed organ; and others, and they perhaps the majority, held that the *jus vocandi ad ministerium* vested jointly in the clergy, the magistrate, and the people; yet as all agreed in the principle above stated, viz., that wherever the Church is, there is the right of administering the gospel, they universally acknowledged the validity of each other's orders.

The second principle, which secured unity and mutual recognition in the midst of diversity both of opinion and practice, is nearly allied to the one just mentioned. The Reformers distinguished between what is essential and what is circumstantial in a call to the ministry. The essentials are, the call of God, the consent of the candidate, and the consent of the Church. The circumstantials are, the mode in which the consent of the Church is expressed, and the ceremonies by which that assent is publicly manifested.* However important these circumstantials may be, they are still matters about which Churches may differ, and yet remain Churches.

While the principle was thus clearly inculcated that every Church could decide for itself as to the mode of electing and ordaining ministers, it was no less strenuously held that every Church had a right to judge for itself of the qualifications of its own ministers. Hence, the fact that a man was recognized as a minister in one denominational Church, was not regarded as proving that he had the right to act as a minister in the churches of another denomination. We may admit a Baptist or Independent minister to be a minister, and yet, if he wishes to act as such in our Church, we have a perfect right, first, to be satisfied as to his personal fitness; and, secondly, that his call to the ministry should be ascertained and authenticated in the way which we believe to be enjoined in Scripture.

* *Essentia vocationis*, says Turrettin, *consistit in triplici consensu, Dei, Ecclesiæ, et vocati. . . . Modus vocationis, consistit in actibus quibusdam vel præcedaneis, vel concomitantibus, sine quibus vocatio confusa foret et inordinata, qualia sunt examen fidei et morum, testimonium probæ vitæ, benedictio, et manuum impositio. Quoad prius, cum essentiale vocationis possit esse in cœtu, ubi desunt pastores, certum est populum fidelem posse vocationem facere in casu summæ necessitatis. . . . Sic non desinit vocatio esse plena et sufficiens quoad essentialia sine pastoribus. Quoad ritus et ceremonias vocationis, quæ non sunt de essentia vocationis, obtinere debent in ecclesia constituta, sed non semper observari possunt in ecclesia constituenda et reformanda.* Vol. iii. 261. Again, *Dum in ecclesia viget ministerium, illa debet quidem eo uti ad vocationem pastorum, nec pastores ordinarie instituere potest nisi per ministerium jam constitutum. Sed deficiente ministerio, vel misere corrupto, potest ipsa sibi ministros eligere ad sui ædificationem, etiam sine ministerii interventu; tum quia hoc jus habet a Deo, tum quia omni tempore et loco tenetur ministerium conservare.*

It is easy to see how the denial, or oversight, by the Church of England of the three great Protestant principles, to which we have referred, has led to her present isolated and anti-Protestant position. Regarding the Church as essentially an external organization with a definite form of government, she is slow to recognize as Churches any societies not organized according to that model. The profession of the true religion is not sufficient to sustain the claim of any communion to be regarded as a Christian Church. As no man can be a Christian if not subject to a bishop, so no society can be a Church, unless episcopally organized. The ministry is an office continued in the Church by a regular succession of prelatical ordinations, and therefore cannot exist when such ordination is wanting. It is the object of Mr. Goode's book to prove that such is not the original and genuine doctrine of the Church of England; that these anti-Protestant principles are foreign from her original constitution, and that her present anti-Protestant position is due to the perverting influence of the Romanizing party within her pale.

The occasion for the publication of the treatise before us, was the printing of a private letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, obtained under false pretences, by a convert to Romanism. In that letter the Archbishop said, in reference to "the validity of the orders of the foreign Protestant non-episcopal churches," "I hardly imagine there are two bishops on the bench, or one clergyman in fifty throughout our Church, who would deny the validity of the order of those pastors, solely on account of their wanting the imposition of episcopal hands." This avowal caused a great outcry. The Tractarians were shocked to hear the Primate of all England deny their fundamental doctrine of apostolic succession and grace of orders. A cloud of publications issued from the press, assailing the Archbishop in terms such as those only could use who regarded him as a fallen archangel. The higher the reverence due to him if faithful, the greater the execration justified by his apostasy. Mr. Goode, so extensively and so favourably known by his able and learned work on the "Rule of Faith," here undertakes to vindicate the Archbishop, and to prove that it is not "a doctrine of the Church of England, that episcopal ordination is a *sine qua non* to constitute a valid Christian ministry." His first argument is drawn from the fact, that under Henry VIII. the bishops and clergy put forth a document containing the very doctrine on which the validity of Presbyterian ordinations has been chiefly rested, namely, the parity of bishops and presbyters, with respect to the ministerial powers essentially and by right belonging to them. In the *Institution of a Christian Man*, put forth by the bishops and clergy, in 1537, we read as follows:

"'As touching the sacrament of holy orders, we think it convenient

that all bishops and preachers shall instruct and teach the people committed unto their spiritual charge, first, how that Christ and his apostles did institute and ordain, in the New Testament, that besides the civil powers and governance of kings and princes, (which is called *potestas gladii*, the power of the sword,) there should also be continually in the Church militant certain other ministers or officers, which should have special power, authority and commission, under Christ, to preach and teach the word of God unto his people; to dispense and administer the sacraments of God unto them, &c., &c.'

"'That this office, this power and authority, was committed and given by Christ and his apostles unto certain persons only, that is to say, unto priests or bishops, whom they did elect, call, and admit thereunto, by their prayer and imposition of their hands.'

"And, speaking of 'the sacrament of orders' to be administered by the bishop, it observes, when noticing the various orders in the Church of Rome: '*The truth is, that in the New Testament there is no mention made of any degrees or distinctions in orders, but only of deacons or ministers, and of priests or bishops.*' And throughout, when speaking of the jurisdiction and other privileges belonging to the ministry, it speaks of them as belonging to 'priests or bishops.'

"Again in the revision of this work set forth by the king in 1543, entitled, *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man*, in the chapter on 'the Sacrament of Orders,' priests and bishops are spoken of as of the same order."

Again, "In the autumn of 1540 certain questions were proposed by the king to the chief bishops and divines of the day, of which the tenth was this: 'Whether bishops or priests were first? and if the priests were first, then the priest made the bishop.' With the wording of this question we have nothing to do, and should certainly be sorry to be made answerable for it; but our object is to see what views were elicited in the answers. Now to this question the Archbishop of Canterbury (Cranmer) replied: 'The bishops and priests were at one time, and were not two things, but both one office, in the beginning of Christ's religion.' The Archbishop of York (Lee) says: 'The name of a bishop is *not properly a name of order, but a name of office*, signifying an overseer. And although the inferior shepherds have also care to oversee their flock, yet, forsomuch as the bishop's charge is also to oversee the shepherds, the name of overseer is given to the bishops, and not to the other; and as they be *in degree* higher, so in their consecration we find difference even from the primitive Church.' The Bishop of London (Bonner) says: 'I think the bishops were first, and yet I think it is *not of importance, whether the priest then made the bishop, or else the bishop the priest;* considering (after the sentence of St. Jerome) that in

the beginning of the Church there was none (or, if it were, very small) difference between a bishop and a priest, especially touching the signification.' The Bishop of St. David's, (Barlow,) and the Bishop elect of Westminster, (Thirlby,) held that bishops and priests '*at the beginning were all one.*' Dr. Robertson, in his answer, says: '*Nec opinor absurdum esse, ut sacerdos episcopum consecret si episcopus haberi non potest.*' Dr. Cox (afterwards Bishop of Ely) says: 'Although by Scripture (as St. Hierome saith) priests and bishops be one, and therefore the one not before the other, yet bishops, as they be now, were after priests, and therefore made of priests.' Dr. Redmayn, the learned master of Trinity College, Cambridge, says: 'They be of like beginning, and at the beginning were both one, as St. Hierome and other old authors show by the Scripture, whereof one made another indifferently.' Dr. Edgeworth says: 'That the priests in the primitive Church made bishops, I think no inconvenience, (as Jerome saith, in an *Epist. ad Evagrium.*) Even like as soldiers should choose one among themselves to be their captain; so did priests choose one of themselves to be their bishop, for consideration of his learning, gravity, and good living, &c., and also for to avoid schisms among themselves by them, that some might not draw people one way, and others another way, if they lacked one Head among them.'"

In turning to the divines of Queen Elizabeth's reign, when the formularies of the Church of England were finally constituted and established, our author quotes in the first instance the learned bishop of Exeter, Dr. Alley, who in his Prelections on 1 Peter read publicly in St. Paul's, in 1560, says:

"'What difference is between a bishop and a priest, St. Hierome, writing ad Titum, doth declare, whose words be these: "*Idem est ergo presbyter, qui episcopus,*" &c.; a priest, therefore, is the same that a bishop is, &c.'

"And having given Jerome's words in full, he adds:

'These words are alleged, that it may appear priests among the elders to have been *even the same that bishops were.* But it grew by little and little that the whole charge and cure should be appointed to one bishop within his precinct, that the seeds of dissension might utterly be rooted out.' (Alley's *Poor Man's Library,* 2d ed. 5571, tom. i. fol. 95, 96.)

"It could hardly be doubted, then, by one who held this, that if the circumstances of the Church required it, Presbyterian ordination would be valid.

"About the same period, namely, in 1563, we have a much stronger testimony from Dr. Pilkington, then Bishop of Durham:

'Yet remains one doubt unanswered in these few words, when he says, "that the government of the Church was committed to bishops,"

as though they had received a larger and higher commission from God of doctrine and discipline than other lower priests or ministers have, and thereby might challenge a greater prerogative. But this is to be understood, that *the privileges and superiorities, which bishops have above other ministers, are rather granted by men for maintaining of better order and quietness in commonwealths than commanded by God in his word.* Ministers have better knowledge and utterance some than other, but their ministry is of equal dignity. God's commission and commandment is like and indifferent to all priest, bishop, archbishop, prelate, by what name soever he be called. . . . . St. Paul calls the elders of Ephesus together and says, "the Holy Ghost made them bishops to rule the Church of God." (Acts xx.) He writes also to the bishops of Philippos, meaning the ministers. . . . . St. Jerome, in his commentary on the first chapter *Ad. Tit.*, says, "that a bishop and priest is all one." . . . . A bishop is the name of an office, labour, and pains.' (*Confut. of an Addition. Works*, ed. Park Soc. pp. 493, 494.)

"Both these were among the bishops who settled our Articles, on the accession of Queen Elizabeth.

"Our next witness shall be Bishop Jewell, of whose standing in our Church it is unnecessary to add a word. On the parity of order in priests and bishops, he says:

'Is it so horrible a heresy as he [Harding] maketh it, to say, that by the Scriptures of God a bishop and a priest are all one? or knoweth he how far, and unto whom, he reacheth the name of an heretic? Verily Chrysostom saith: "Between a bishop and a priest in a manner there is no difference." (In 1 Tim. hom. 11.) S. Hierome saith . . . "The apostle plainly teacheth us, that priests and bishops be all one." (*ad Evagr.*) S. Augustine saith: "What is a bishop but the first priest; that is to say, the highest priest?" (In *Quæst. N. et V. Test.* q. 101.) So saith S. Ambrose: "There is but one consecration (*ordinatio*) of priest and bishop; for both of them are priests, but the bishop is the first." (In Tim. c. 3.) All these, and other more holy Fathers, together with St. Paul the apostle, for thus saying, by M. Harding's advice, must be holden for heretics.' (*Def. of Apol.* Pt. ii. c. 9. div. i. *Works*, p. 202. See also Pt. ii. c. iii. div. i. p. 85.)

"But there is a passage in his writings still more strongly bearing on the point in question. Harding had charged our Church with deriving its orders from apostate bishops, &c. Jewell replies:

'Therefore we neither have bishops without Church, nor Church without bishops. Neither doth the Church of England this day depend of them whom you often call apostates, as if our Church were no Church without them. . . . . *If there were not one, neither of them nor of us left alive, yet would not therefore the whole Church of England flee*

to Lovaine. Tertullian saith:—"And we being laymen, are we not priests? It is written, Christ hath made us both a kingdom and priests unto God his Father. The authority of the Church, and the honour by the assembly, or council of order sanctified of God, hath made a difference between the lay and the clergy. Where as there is no assembly of ecclesiastical order, the priest being there alone (without the company of other priests) doth both minister the oblation and also baptize. Yea, and be there but three together, and though they be laymen, yet is there a Church. For every man liveth of his own faith."' (*Def. of Apol.* Pt. ii. c. v. div. i. p. 129.)

"It is needless to point out how much this passage implies.

"We proceed to Archbishop Whitgift.

"And first, as to the parity of order in bishops and priests, he speaks thus:

'Every bishop is a priest, but every priest hath not *the name and title* of a bishop, in that meaning that Jerome in this place [*Ad Evagr.*] taketh the name of a bishop. . . . Neither shall you find this word *episcopus* commonly used but for *that priest that is in degree over and above the rest,* notwithstanding *episcopus* be oftentimes called *presbyter,* because *presbyter* is *the more general name.*' (*Def. of Answ. to Adm.* 1574, fol. p. 383.)

'Although Hierome confess, that by Scripture *presbyter* and *episcopus* is all one (AS IN DEED THEY BE *quoad ministerium*), yet doth he acknowledge a superiority of the bishop before the minister . . . . . Therefore no doubt this is Jerome's mind, that a bishop *in degree and dignity* is above the minister, though he be one and the self-same with him in the office of ministering the word and sacraments.' (*Ib.* pp. 384, 385.)

"Secondly, as to the form of government to be followed in the Church. His adversary, Cartwright, like the great body of the Puritans, contended for the exclusive admissibility of the platform of Church government he advocated; and, like Archdeacon Denison, maintained that 'matters of discipline and kind of government are matters necessary to salvation and of faith.' And this is Whitgift's reply:—

'I confess that in a Church collected together in one place, and at liberty, government is necessary in the second kind of necessity; but that any one kind of government is so necessary that without it the Church cannot be saved, *or that it may not be altered into some other kind thought to be more expedient,* I utterly deny, and the reasons that move me so to do be these. The first is, because *I find no one certain and perfect kind of government prescribed or commanded in the Scriptures to the Church of Christ,* which no doubt should have been done, if

it had been a matter necessary unto the salvation of the Church. Secondly, because *the essential notes of the Church be these only; the true preaching of the word of God, and the right administration of the sacraments:* for (as Master Calvin saith, in his book against the Anabaptists): "This honour is meet to be given to the word of God, and to his sacraments, that wheresoever we see the word of God truly preached, and God according to the same truly worshipped, and the sacraments without superstition administered, there we may without all controversy conclude the Church of God to be:" and a little after: "So much we must esteem the word of God and his sacraments, that wheresoever we find them to be, there we may certainly know the Church of God to be, although in the common life of men many faults and errors be found." The same is the opinion of other godly and learned writers, and the judgment of the *Reformed Churches*, as appeareth by their Confessions. So that notwithstanding government, or some kind of government, may be a part of the Church, touching the outward form and perfection of it, yet is it not such a part of the essence and being, but that it may be the Church of Christ without this or that kind of government, and therefore the kind of government of the Church is not necessary unto salvation.' (*Ib.* p. 81.)

'*I deny that the Scriptures do . . . . set down any one certain form and kind of government of the Church to be perpetual for all times, persons, and places, without alteration.*'" (*Ib.* p. 84.)

The next testimony is that of Hooker, who says: "'There may be sometimes very just and sufficient reasons to allow ordination made without a bishop. *The whole Church visible being the true original subject of all power*, it hath not ordinarily allowed any other than bishops alone to ordain; howbeit as the ordinary cause is ordinarily in all things to be observed, so it may be in some cases not unnecessary that we decline from the ordinary ways. Men may be extraordinarily, yet allowably, two ways admitted unto spiritual functions in the Church. One is, when God himself doth of himself raise up any . . . . Another . . . . when the exigence of necessity doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the Church, which otherwise we would willingly keep.'—*Ecclesiastical Polity*, vii. 14. See also iii. 11.

"In a former passage of the same book," says our author, Hooker "distinctly admits the power of the Church at large to take away the episcopal form of government from the Church, and says:

'Let them [the bishops] continually bear in mind that it is rather the force of custom, whereby the Church, having so long found it good to continue the regiment of her virtuous bishops, doth still uphold, maintain, and honour them, in that respect, than that any true and heavenly law can be showed by the evidence whereof it may of a truth

appear, that the Lord himself hath appointed presbyters for ever to be under the regiment of bishops;' adding, that 'their authority' is 'a sword which the Church hath power to take from them.'" *Ib.* vii. 5. See also i. 14, and iii. 10.

When we remember that Hooker is the greatest authority on ecclesiastical polity in the English Church, these extracts have special interest. They contain the clear assertion of the principle, which is, after all, the turning point between Protestants and Romanists, that all Church power vests ultimately in the whole Church, and not in the clergy, much less in the bishops. If the reverse were true, then the Church depends on the episcopate; derives its spiritual life through that channel as the only bond of connection with Christ. A corrupt bishop or presbyter could never be deposed or changed unless by others, who might be themselves corrupt. God, according to this theory, has not only left his sheep in the power of those who, as the apostle says, may be grievous wolves, but he has, if we may reverently so speak, debarred himself from giving the gifts of the Spirit in any other way than through the line of apostolical succession. There was a time when a similar theory was held in reference to the state, and when men believed that the kingly office was instituted by divine command; that subjects could not depose their sovereign, nor change the succession, but were shut up to passive submission. But men have since discovered that the doctrine that civil power vests ultimately in the people, is perfectly consistent with the doctrine, that "the powers that be are ordained of God, and that whoso resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." This was a lesson which princes and people were slow to learn, and it is well for statesmen, who sometimes forget their obligations and speak with small respect of the clergy, to remember that this great emancipating truth was first effectually taught to the world by the Protestant ministry. It was not until they had avowed and acted on the principle, that although the ministry was a divine institution, and obedience to ministers, within their appropriate sphere, is a matter of divine command, yet as all Church power vests ultimately in the people, they have the right to reject any minister, even though an apostle, who preached another gospel, that the nations awoke to the consciousness of a like power with regard to their civil rulers.

Another most important principle here avowed by Hooker is, that nothing binds the Church but an express law of Christ; that any office the Church has created she may abolish. This he applies to the episcopate, though he labours to prove it was instituted by the Apostles. But as it was instituted by them, according to his doctrine, not as something commanded and necessary, but simply as expedient, he con-

sistently admitted the Church might abolish it. Of course these principles are utterly inconsistent with the doctrine that there can be no Church without a bishop.

Our author proceeds to quote several of the bishops, and other writers of that period, who in their controversy with the non-conformists maintain the ground, that no one form of Church government is laid down in Scripture as essential or universally obligatory. Thus Dr. Bridges, afterwards Bishop of Oxford, in his "'Defence of the Government Established in the Church of England,'" 1587, says—if the form of government in the Church "'be not a matter of necessity, but such as may be varied,' then 'there is no reason why we should break the bond of peace, and make such trouble in the Church of God, to reject the government that is, in the nature thereof, as much indifferent, as the solemnizing this or that day the memorial of the Lord's resurrection.'" p. 319.

In opposition to the same class, Dr. Cooper, Bishop of Lincoln, then of Winchester, says, in his Admonition to the People of England, 1589: "'Only this I desire, that they will lay down out of the word of God some just proofs, and a direct commandment, that there should be in all ages and states of the Church of Christ one only form of government.'" p. 61–63.

Dr. Casin, Dean of Arches, in 1584, in a work, "published by authority," asks: "'Are all the Churches of Denmark, Swedeland, Poland, Germany, Rhetia, Vallis Telina, the nine cantons of Switzerland reformed, with their confederates of Geneva, France, of the Low Countries, and of Scotland, in all points, either of substance or of circumstance, disciplinated alike? Nay, they neither are, can be, nor yet need so to be; seeing it cannot be proved, that any set and exact form thereof is recommended unto us by the word of God.'"—*Answer to An Abstract of Certain Acts of Parliament*, 1584, p. 58.

Of course men who held that no one form of government is essential to the Church, could not maintain, and did not pretend, that episcopal ordination was necessary to a valid ministry.

Our author next appeals to the Articles and other Formularies of the Church of England, which were drawn up by the school of theologians, whose writings are quoted above.

The 23d Article: "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preacher, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." That this article does not teach the necessity of episcopal

ordination, our author argues from the obvious import of the works, from the known opinions and practice of the authors of the 39 Articles, and from contemporary and subsequent expositions from sources of authority.

Again, in the 55th Canon of 1604, all the clergy of the Church of England are required to pray for the Church of Scotland, which was then, as now, Presbyterian.

The third argument of our author is from the practice of the Church. From the Reformation until the Restoration of Charles II., Presbyterian ministers were admitted to the cure of souls in the Church of England without re-ordination. At the Restoration a law was passed, requiring episcopal ordination in the case of all who were admitted to preferment in the English Church, and a clause to the same effect was introduced into the preface to the ordination service. This rule, however, as our author urges, proves nothing more than that in the judgment of those who made it, the ministers of an Episcopal Church should be episcopally ordained. With the same propriety any Presbyterian might insist on Presbyterian ordination for all its own ministers, without thereby unchurching other denominations. Mr. Goode, therefore, insists there was no change of doctrine as to this matter at the time of the Restoration.

As to the previous admission of non-episcopal ministers to office in the Church of England, the evidence is abundant. In 1582 the Vicar-General of the Archbishop of Canterbury granted a license to John Morrison to the effect—"'Since you were admitted and ordained to sacred orders and the holy ministry, by the imposition of hands, according to the laudable form and rite of the Reformed Church of Scotland—we, therefore, approving and ratifying the form of your ordination and preferment—grant to you, by express command of the reverend father in Christ, Lord Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, to celebrate divine offices, to minister the sacraments," &c.—*Strype's Life of Grindal*, Bk. 2. c. 13.

The High Church Bishop Cosin, writing from Paris in 1650, says:—

"'Therefore, if at any time a minister so ordained in these French Churches came to incorporate himself in ours, and to receive a public charge or cure of souls among us in the Church of England, (as I have knows some of them to have so done of late, and can instance in *many other* before my time,) *our bishops did not re-ordain him before they admitted him to his charge, as they must have done, if his former ordination here in France had been void.* NOR DID OUR LAWS REQUIRE MORE OF HIM THAN TO DECLARE HIS PUBLIC CONSENT TO THE RELIGION RECEIVED AMONGST US, AND TO SUBSCRIBE THE ARTICLES ESTABLISHED."—(Letter to Mr. Cordel, in Basire's "Account of Bishop

Cosin," annexed to his "Funeral Sermon;" and also in Bishop Fleetwood's *Judgment of the Church of England in the case of Lay Baptism*, 2d ed. Lond. 1712, p. 52.)

And the same testimony is borne by Bishop Fleetwood, who says that this was "certainly her practice [*i. e.*, of our Church) during the reigns of King James and King Charles I., and to the year 1661. We had many ministers from Scotland, from France, and the Low Countries, who were ordained by presbyters only, and not bishops, and they were instituted into benefices with cure . . . and yet were never reordained, but only subscribed the Articles." (*Judgment of Church of England in case of Lay Baptism*, 1712, 8vo. pt. ii. *Works*, p. 552.)

Mr. Goode follows up these proofs with a series of quotations from the leading English theologians of a later date, all going to show that even those who took the ground of the divine right of episcopacy were far from adopting the principles of the Tractarian school, or from making Episcopacy essential to the being of the Church. We think he has succeeded in proving his point, though doubtless many of his authorities might be, as they have in fact been, called into question. We know that Tractarians are famous for their *Catena Patrum*, quoting, as we think most disingenuously, detached sentences from the writings of men in support of principles which they expressly repudiated. We do not believe that our author is chargeable with any such offence. We, however, give the quotations selected from his pages on his authority, as our only object was to show how the evangelical members of the Church of England vindicate her from the anti-Protestant and schismatical principles of the modern Anglo-Catholic school.

CHAPTER X.

PRESBYTERIAN LITURGIES. [*]

It is a very prevalent impression, that the use of liturgies in public worship, is one of the peculiarities of prelatical Churches. Not only Episcopalians, but many Presbyterians are in the habit of specifying Episcopacy, confirmation, and the use of a liturgy, as intimately associated, and as the distinguishing characteristics of prelacy. As to confirmation, it is true that considered as a sacrament, or a rite conferring grace, it is peculiar to the ritual and hierarchical system. The grace conferred in baptism is, according to that system, confirmed and increased by the imposition of the bishop's hands in confirmation. For such a service there is no warrant in Scripture; and it is entirely incompatible with the whole evangelical theory of the Church, and of the method of salvation. But confirmation, as a solemn service, in which those recognized in their infancy as members of the Church, on the faith of their parents, are confirmed in their Church standing, on the profession of their own faith, is retained in form or in substance in all Protestant Churches. In the Lutheran, and in most of the Reformed, or Calvinistic Churches on the continent of Europe, children baptized in infancy, when they come to years of discretion, are publicly examined as to their knowledge of Christian doctrine, and, if free from scandal, are called upon to assume for themselves their baptismal vows, and are recognized as members of the Church in full communion. In most Presbyterian Churches in Great Britain and Ireland, and especially in this country, something more than competent knowledge and freedom from scandal being required, in order to admission to sealing ordinances, baptized youth are not as a matter of course admitted to the Lord's supper, on their arrival at the years of discretion. It is our custom to wait until they are prepared to make a credible profession of a change of heart. When this is done they are confirmed; that is, they are recognized as members of the Church in full communion, on their own profession. The same examination as to knowledge, the same profession as to faith, the same engagements as to obedience—in short, the same assumption of the obligations of the baptismal covenant, and the same consequent access to the Lord's table, which in

[* Article, same title, *Princeton Review*, 1855, p. 445.]

other Churches constitute confirmation, in ours constitute what we are accustomed to call admission to sealing ordinances. The only difference is, that we require more than knowledge and freedom from scandal as the condition of confirming baptized persons as members of the Church in full communion. It is a great mistake, therefore, to represent confirmation as a prelatical service. In one form or another, it is the necessary sequence of infant baptism, and must be adopted wherever pedo-baptism prevails.

It is a still greater mistake to represent liturgies as an adjunct of Episcopacy. The fact is, that the use of liturgies was introduced into all the Protestant Churches at the time of the Reformation, and that in the greater number of them, they continue in use to the present day.

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Why has the use of liturgies by the Reformed Churches been either wholly, as in the case of the Scotch and American Presbyterians, or partially, as in the case of the Dutch Church in this country, been laid aside? The reasons are various, and some of the most influential peculiar to Presbyterians. One reason, no doubt is, the general dislike to be trammelled by forms; which dislike is the natural product of the spirit of liberty, which is inseparable from the principles of Presbyterianism. The consciousness of the essential equality of all in whom the Spirit of God dwells, and the conviction that those whom Christ calls to the ministry, he qualifies for the discharge of its duties, naturally produces a revolt against the prescription by authority of the very words in which the public worship of God is to be conducted. Those who can walk are impatient of leading strings. It cannot be doubted that the theory of Presbyterianism is opposed to the use of liturgies. In the ideal state of the Church—in that state which our theory contemplates, where every minister is really called of God, and is the organ of the Holy Ghost in the exercise of his functions, liturgies would be fetters, which nothing but compulsion could induce any man to wear. How incongruous is it with our conception of the Apostolic Church, that John, Paul and Peter should be compelled to read just such and such portions of Scripture, to use prescribed words in prayer, and to limit their supplications and thanksgivings to specified topics! The compulsory use of liturgies is, and has ever been felt to be, inconsistent with the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. It is inconsistent with the inward promptings of the Spirit of God, as he dwells and works in the hearts of his people. As no genuine, living Christian can bear to be confined to a prescribed form of prayer in his closet, so no minister, called by the Spirit to the sacred office, can fail to feel such forms an impediment and a constraint. They are like the stiff, constraining dress, imposed on the soldier, for the sake of uniformity and

general effect, which he is glad to throw off when in actual service. The Scriptures, therefore, which in all things outward, conform to what is the inward product of the Spirit, do not prescribe any form of words to be used in the worship of God. There are no indications of the use of liturgies in the New Testament. There is no evidence of the prevalence of written forms during the first three centuries. They were gradually introduced, and they were never uniform. Every important Church had its own liturgy. The modern Anglican idea of having one form of worship for all Churches, never entered the minds of the early Christians. We fully believe, therefore, that the compulsory use of a liturgy is inconsistent with Christian liberty; and that the disposition to use such forms, as a general rule, decreases with the increase of intelligence and spirituality in the Church. Without questioning or doubting the sincere and eminent piety of hundreds and thousands of the ministers and members of Churches which continue in the trammels of prescribed liturgical forms, we still believe that one of the causes why the Church of Scotland never submitted to the authoritative imposition of an unvarying form of public worship, and gradually dispensed with the use of a liturgy altogether, is to be found in its superior intelligence and piety.

Another cause of the fact in question, is to be found in the essential or unavoidable inadequacy of all forms. They are not only inconsistent, when authoritatively imposed, with the liberty of Christians, but they are, and must be, insufficient. Neither the circumstances, nor the inward state of the Church, or of any worshipping assembly, are always the same. It is true, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession, are always to be included in our addresses to God; but varying inward and outward circumstances call for different modes of address, and no one uniform mode can possibly satisfy the spiritual necessities of the people. Sometimes the minister goes to the house of God burdened with some great truth, or with his heart filled with zeal for some special service in the cause of Christ, the conviction of sinners, the edification of saints, the work of missions, the relief of the poor; but he is forbidden to give utterance to the language of his heart, or to bring his people into sympathy with himself by appropriate religious services. Sometimes general coldness or irreligion prevails among the people; sometimes they are filled with the fruits, and rejoicing in the presence of the Spirit; sometimes they are in prosperity, sometimes in adversity. It is as impossible that any one form of worship should suit all these diversities, as that any one kind of dress should suit all seasons of the year, or all classes of men; or that any one kind of food, however wholesome, should be adapted to all states of the human body.

Besides these general causes there are others, perhaps still more influential, of a specific character, which produced the distaste for liturgies in the minds of the Presbyterians of Great Britain and America. The real question in their case, was not liturgy or no liturgy, but whether they should submit to the use of the liturgy of the Church of England. Besides, therefore, the general objections to any prescribed, unvarying form of public worship, all the specific objections entertained by Presbyterians against the services of the English Church operated in this matter. The English liturgy was framed on the avowed principle of departing as little as possible from the Romish forms. It was designed to conciliate those who were yet addicted to the papacy. It retained numerous prescriptions as to dress and ceremonies, to which conscientious objections were entertained by the majority of Protestants. It required the people to kneel in the reception of the Eucharist, which was so associated with the worship of the host, that many left the Church of England principally on that account. Its baptismal service could not be understood in its natural sense otherwise than as teaching the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. It required the minister to commit to the grave all baptized persons who did not die by their own hand, or in a state of excommunication, "in the sure hope of a blessed resurrection," no matter how heretical or how profligate they may have been.* It was constructed on the platform of the Romish Calendar. Not only the great Christian festivals of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, which Protestants on the continent continued to observe, were retained, but particular services were prescribed for a multitude of holy days. There was a special service for the first, second, third, and fourth Sundays in Advent; then for Christmas, and the first Sunday after Christmas; then for the circumcision of Christ; then for the Epiphany; then for the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth Sundays after Epiphany; then for Septuagesima; then for the second and first Sundays before Lent; then for each of the Sundays during Lent; then for Good Friday, Easter, and the five Sundays after Easter; then for Ascension-day; then Whitsunday; then Trinity Sunday, and each of the twenty-five Sundays after Trinity; then St. Andrew's-day; St. Thomas's-day; Purification of the Blessed Virgin; St. Matthias, St. Mark, St. Philip, St. James, and the Apostles, St. Barnabas; Nativity of St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, St. Bartholomew, St. Matthew, St. Michael and all Angels, &c., &c., All Saints, the Holy Innocents, &c. How foreign is all this to the simplicity of the gospel! It would seem impossible to live in ac-

* This objectionable feature of the English liturgy has been removed from the Book of Common Prayer, as adopted by the Episcopal Church in this country.

cordance with the spirit of the English service-book without making the Christian life a formality. In perfect consistency with these and similar objections to the English service-book, as a whole, we feel bound to say, that we fully and cordially agree with the celebrated Robert Hall, at least as to the Morning and Evening Prayers, that for evangelical sentiment, fervour of devotion, and majestic simplicity of language, it is entitled to the highest praise. And as to the Litany, which is at least a thousand years old, and no more belongs to the Church of England than the Creed does, we know no human composition that can be compared with it. These excellencies, however, which, in a great measure were derived from forms already drawn up by the Reformers on the continent,* do not redeem the character of the book considered as a whole.

This book, so objectionable as a whole, in its origin, adjuncts and character, was forced on the English Church and people by the civil power, contrary to their will. Bishops, clergy and parliament for years endeavoured to have it rectified, but at last submitted. The attempt to enforce its observance on the Scotch Church, led to one of the most wicked and cruel persecutions the world has ever seen. Is it wonderful, then, that a strong repugnance to the very name of a liturgy, should be roused in the minds of the Presbyterians of Great Britain and of their descendants in America? Of the liturgies of Calvin, of Knox, of the Huguenots, of the German and Reformed Churches they knew nothing. A liturgy in their minds meant the Book of Common Prayer, framed for the comprehension of papists, enforced by the will of Elizabeth, rejected at the cost of property and life, by their pious ancestors. It would be contrary to the laws of our nature, if such a struggle as this did not lead to some exaggeration of feeling and opinion on the other side. No candid man can blame the non-Conformists of England, or the Presbyterians of Scotland, if their sad experience of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny in enforcing an obnoxious prayer-book, led them to the extreme of denouncing the use of all forms. That one extreme produces another, is the tritest of aphorisms. The extreme of insisting that certain forms should alone be used, begat the extreme of insisting that no forms should be allowed. It is obvious however to the candid, that between these extremes there is a wide and safe middle ground. That safe middle ground is the optional use of a liturgy, or form of public service, having the sanction of the Church. If such a book were compiled from the liturgies of Calvin, Knox, and

* On the extent to which the English Liturgy is indebted to the continental Reformers, see pp. 187–200 of the work under review:—*Eutaxia; or, the Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches.* By a Minister of the Presbyterian Church. New York: M. W. Dodd, Brick Church Chapel. 1855. pp. 260.

of the Reformed Churches, containing appropriate prayers for ordinary public worship, for special occasions, as for times of sickness, declension, or public calamity, with forms for the administration of baptism, of the Lord's Supper, for funerals and for marriage, we are bold to say that it would in our judgment be a very great blessing. We say such a book might be *compiled;* we do not believe it could possibly be written. It may be difficult to see why it should be so; but the fact can hardly be doubted, that prayers written by individuals are, except in cases of uncommon religious exaltation, or in times of the powerful effusion of the Spirit, comparatively worthless. A prayer to suit the Church must be the product of the Church. It must be free in thought, language and feeling from everything which belongs to the individual. It must be the product, in other words, of the Holy Ghost. The only way to secure this result is either to take the prayers recorded in the Scriptures, or those which the Spirit, whose office it is to teach us how to pray, has uttered through the lips of the children of God, and which have in the process of ages, been freed from their earthly mixture, and received the sanction of those in whom the Spirit dwells. For a man to sit down and write a volume of prayers for other people to use, and especially a liturgy for the service of the Church, seems to us very much like John Wesley's making his five volumes of sermons a creed.

These two conditions being supposed, first, that the book should be compiled and not written; and secondly, that its use should be optional—we are strongly of opinion that it would answer a most important end. The great objections to the use of liturgies are, that the authoritative imposition of them is inconsistent with Christian liberty; secondly, that they never can be made to answer all the varieties of experience and occasions; thirdly, that they tend to formality, and cannot be an adequate substitute for the warm outgoings of the heart moved by the Spirit of genuine devotion. These objections we consider valid against all unvarying forms authoritatively imposed. But they do not bear against the preparation and optional use of a Book of Common Prayer.

The advantages which we would anticipate from the preparation of such a book, or of a return to the usage of the early Churches of the Reformation, are principally the following: In the first place, it would be a great assistance to those who are not specially favoured with the gift of prayer, and thus tend to elevate and improve this important part of public worship. We believe that *ex tempore* preaching, when the preacher has the requisite gifts and graces, is the best preaching in the world; without those gifts, in no ordinary measure, it is the worst. So, as we have already admitted, *ex tempore* prayer, when the spirit of prayer is present, is the best method of praying; better than any form

prescribed by the Church, and better than any form previously prepared by the man himself. We have also admitted that the disposition to use written forms, as a general rule, decreases in proportion to the increase of intelligence and spirituality of the Church. All this being conceded, it is nevertheless lamentably true, that the prayers are, in general, the least attractive and satisfactory part of our Church services. This may arise partly from the fact that the qualifications for this part of public worship are more rarely possessed than those requisite for acceptable preaching. It is certain that many eminent preachers have been remarkably deficient in the gift of prayer. This is said to have been the case with President Davies, Robert Hall, and Dr. Chalmers. It is evident, that to pray well requires a very unusual combination of graces and gifts. It requires a devout spirit; much religious experience; such natural or acquired refinement as is sufficient to guard against all coarseness, irreverence, and impropriety in thought or language; such inward guidance or mental discipline as shall render the prayer well ordered and comprehensive. These gifts, alas! are not common in their combination, even among good men. Another reason for the evil in question, is that so little attention is commonly given by our ministers to previous preparation for conducting this part of divine worship. They labour hard to prepare to address the people; but venture on addressing God without premeditation. Dr. Witherspoon says that the Rev. Dr. Gillies of Glasgow, who in his judgment exceeded any man he had ever heard in the excellency of his prayers, was accustomed to devote unwearied pains to preparation for this part of his ministerial work, and for the first ten years of his pastoral life never wrote a sermon without writing a prayer appropriate to it.* This was Calvin's habit, and many of the sermons printed in his works, have prayers annexed; an aid which Calvin found needful, and no man living need be ashamed of employing.

We have assumed that as a general thing the public prayers in our Churches do not meet the desires and exigencies of the people. We have felt this so often ourselves, we have heard the feeling expressed so often from all classes, that we presume the fact will not be denied. The late venerable Dr. Miller, whose long and wide experience gave him the opportunity of correct judgment, was so sensible of this evil, that he devoted the last labours of his useful life to the preparation of a work on Public Prayer. Of the faults which he laments, he says, in his fourth chapter, he will mention only a few, and then enumerates no less than eighteen! Among these are the following: the frequent occurrence of set phrases: ungrammatical, or low colloquial forms of

* See Dr Miller's "Thoughts on Public Prayer," p. 294.

expression; want of order; minuteness of detail; excessive length; florid style; party or personal allusions; humorous or sarcastic expressions; turning the prayer into a sermon or exhortation; extravagant professions; want of appropriateness; want of reverence, &c., &c. If such evils exist, it is a sin to disregard them. It is a sin not to labour to correct them. As one means of such correction, not the only one, and perhaps not the most important one, would be a collection of prayers for public worship of established character, sanctioned by long approbation of the people of God, and by the authority of the Church; something sanctioned and not prescribed, as in the case of our Book of Psalms and Hymns. Such a book would afford models, guides, and helps which we all need. It would be something which those who felt their weakness could fall back upon, and which even the strongest would in hours of depression be glad to resort to. It has often been said that there is no more propriety in a minister's using prayers prepared to his hand, than in his using sermons written by others. If he is fit to preach, he is fit to pray. There is, however, very great difference between the two cases. In preaching, the minister is not the organ of the people, in prayer he is. They listen to his preaching, they join in his prayers. It is of great importance to their spiritual edification and comfort that there should be nothing with which they cannot sympathize, or which offends or disturbs their feelings. If the preacher offends them, that is one thing, but when they themselves draw near to God, and are made to utter incoherent, wandering, or irreverent prayers, it is a very grievous affliction.

It is, however, quite as much in the celebration of the sacraments, and in the marriage and funeral services, as in public prayer, that the evils Dr. Miller complains of, are experienced. The sacraments are divine institutions intimately connected with the religious life of the Church, and inexpressibly dear to the people of God. A communion service properly conducted and blessed with the manifested presence of the Spirit of God, is like an oasis to travellers in a desert. It is not merely a season of enjoyment, but one in which the soul is sanctified and strengthened for the service of God. How often is the service marred, and the enjoyment and profit of the people hindered by the injudicious and unscriptural manner in whith it is conducted. We do not now refer to the tedious length to which it is often protracted, or to the coldness or deadness of the officiating minister, but to the inappropriateness of the exercises. The true nature of the sacrament is lost sight of; incongruous subjects are introduced, and the communicant is forced either to strive not to listen to what the minister says, or to give up in despair all hope of really communing. Very often the introductory prayer is just such a prayer as might be offered in a

prayer-meeting. It has no special reference to the Lord's supper. It includes such a variety of subjects—petitions for young and old, converted and unconverted, for revivals, for temporal blessings—that it is absolutely impossible for the people to keep their minds on the service in which they are about to engage, and no less impossible that they should be in a proper frame of mind for it. Such a prayer is frequently soon followed by an address on any topic which happens to suggest itself; any truth of Scripture, or any duty, no matter whether it has any special reference to the Lord's supper or not. Sometimes in the very midst of the service the minister undertakes to explain the ordinance—to refute the doctrine of transubstantiation, or to establish the true doctrine concerning Christ's presence—or, he sets forth the qualifications for acceptable communion, and calls upon the people to examine themselves—or to do something else which is absolutely inconsistent with their doing what they then and there ought to do. The service is often ended with protracted prayer, embracing all the usual variety of topics and carrying the mind far away from the proper object of attention. We know from our own experience and from the testimony of innumerable witnesses, that this is a common and a very sore evil. The people of God are defrauded of their spiritual nourishment. They sit down to the table of the Lord, only to have the food withdrawn or withheld, and other things offered in its stead. This produces almost a feeling of resentment. It seems such a wanton injury.

It is absolutely essential to the proper and profitable celebration of the sacraments, first, that their true nature should be apprehended; and secondly, that the unity and harmony of the service should be preserved; that is, that nothing should be introduced into the prayers, or other portions of the service, which tends to divert the attention of the people from the one object before them. The celebration of the Lord's Supper is an act of worship. It is an approach to God in Christ; it is a drawing near to the Son of God as the sacrifice for our sins. The soul comes with penitence, faith, gratitude, and love to the feet of Jesus, and appropriates the benefits of his death, and spiritually feeds on his body and blood. To disturb this sacred communion with the Saviour, by inappropriate instructions or exhortations, is to frustrate the very design of the ordinance. It produces the same effect upon a devout mind as is produced by sermonizing prayers which render devotion impossible. It is a very mistaken zeal for our Church, which leads any man to deny or to defend these frequent blemishes in her sacred services. The Presbyterian order of worship does not need such apologists.

The same general remarks are in a measure applicable to the mode of celebrating marriage and of conducting funerals. Our ministers

and people feel the need of some practical directory and appropriate form for these solemn occasions, which are often rendered unimpressive and unedifying by the manner in which they are conducted.

One great advantage, therefore, which we think would attend the introduction of such a book as has been described, is the improvement it would tend to produce in the conduct of public worship, and in the celebration of other religious services. There is another advantage of scarcely less importance. There are literally thousands of occasions on which public worship should be conducted and the dead buried, when no minister is at hand. In vacant Churches, destitute settlements, in the army, the navy, in merchant vessels, there is a demand for some authorized forms. For the want of a Presbyterian work of the kind intended, the English Prayer Book is used in all parts of the world. Our army and navy officers, when there is no chaplain, and when disposed to secure for those under their command the benefits of religious worship, no matter what their denominational connection, almost universally resort to the liturgy of the English Church. That book, therefore, has gone wherever the English language is used; and it will continue to be resorted to, even by Presbyterians, until their own Church provides a book better suited to their necessities. We are not unmindful of the excellent "Manual for Sailors and Soldiers" published by our Board; but it is evident we need a work of a wider range, and one having the sanction of antiquity and Church authority.

In the purity of our doctrine, in the scriptural character of our ecclesiastical polity, in the simplicity of our mode of worship, the Presbyterian Church has an exalted position, and a hold on the affections of her people, which nothing can destroy. But she has suffered more than can well be estimated from those faults in the conduct of her simple services, which our most venerable ministers have so often pointed out, and from failing to supply her scattered children with those aids for religious worship which their exigencies demand. We do not desire to see anything introduced which would render our public services less simple than they are at present—but merely that means should be taken to secure that what is done should be done well. If God would put it into the heart of some man of large experience in the pastoral life, who has dwelt long upon the mount; a man familiar with the literature of the subject, and with the high intellectual gifts the work demands, to compile a book containing prayers for public worship, and forms for the administration of the sacraments, marriage and funerals, he would do the Church a great service, whether the book ever received the sanction of our ecclesiastical judicatories or not. As public attention, among Congregationalists, the Dutch Reformed, the

German Reformed, and Presbyterian Churches, has become more or less turned to this subject, it is hoped that something may be done which shall be for the interest of the great non-episcopal portion of the Protestant communion.

It is a very common impression that any attempt to construct a Book of Common Prayer would be playing into the hands of the Episcopalians. First, because it would imply a concession in favour of liturgies; secondly, because no book which could now be framed, would be likely to compare favourably with the English Prayer Book; and thirdly, because it would be impossible to give to any new book the authority and sacredness which ages have conferred upon that. We cannot believe that anything which would really improve our public service, could operate unfavourably to the interests of our Church. There would be no concession to Episcopal usages, even if Presbyterians should return to the custom of their forefathers, and introduce a liturgy into all their Churches. But this we regard as impossible and undesirable. We might as well attempt to restore the costume or the armour of the middle ages. There is a very great difference between the uniform and universal use of a form of prayer, and the preparation of forms to serve as models, and to be employed when no minister is present. As to the second consideration above mentioned, we are not disposed to admit the unapproachable excellence of the English forms. The best parts of the English Prayer Book are derived from sources common to all Protestants. We believe a book could be prepared, without including anything not found in the liturgies framed by the continental Reformers, which, as a whole, would be far superior to any prayer-book now in use. As to the want of the sacredness which belongs to antiquity, this, of course, for the time, is an unavoidable defect. The most venerable tree, however, was once a sapling. It is no good reason for not planting a tree, that it has not, and cannot have, the weight of centuries on its boughs. No man objects to founding a new college because it cannot at once be an Oxford or a Harvard. Besides, this objection would be in a measure obviated, by including in such a book nothing which had not been in the use of the Protestant Churches ever since the Reformation. Let it be remembered, that we have not advocated the introduction of a liturgy, but simply the preparation of a book which may be used as the occasion calls for it.

PART II.

APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES.

CHAPTER XI.

HISTORY AND INTENT OF CONSTITUTION. [*]

WE shall endeavour to show, from the origin, from the constitution, and from the uniform practice of the Church, that the theory of Presbyterianism here presented [see note] is altogether false.

The leading points of the case as presented in this Review, are:

1. That the General Assembly, in order to its proper organization, must embrace all the delegates in attendance who are furnished with the proper evidence of their appointment.

2. That the commissioners from presbyteries within the bounds of the four synods, were fully entitled to their seats as members of the Assembly.

3. That the Assembly has no authority to judge of the qualifications of its own members.

The first of these positions, properly explained and limited, we have no disposition to dispute. The second is the one most largely discussed. The right of the delegates from the four synods to their seats, is founded on the assumption that certain acts of the Assembly of 1837, are nugatory. In proof of the invalidity of those acts, the reviewer argues that they are inconsistent with the principles of Presbyterianism; that they rest upon a false basis; and that they are void from uncertainty. In carrying out the first of these arguments, he lays down a new theory of Presbyterianism; the leading features of which are, 1. That our several judicatories are merely courts and advisory councils. 2. That "as to their existence and action they are entirely independent of each other." "One judicatory has no power over another," and one has no right to try or condemn another. 3. The synods and the General Assembly "are merely appellate courts and advisory councils. 4. The General Assembly has no constitutional power to abolish or dissolve a synod; nor a synod a presbytery; nor a presbytery a session. 5. Though certain acts of an inferior court may be reviewed in a higher one, yet if a presbytery recognize a church; or a synod form a presbytery; or the General Assembly erect a synod, the act is forever valid.

* * * * * * * * *

1. What then was the origin and history of our present constitution? It will be remembered that at the period to which it is so common to refer, as the birth-day of the great principles of civil and religious liberty, a convention of divines assembled at Westminster, who, after long deliberation, prepared and published a Confession of Faith and a Direc-

[* Article reviewing "*Review of the Leading Measures of the Assembly of* 1837, *by a Member of the New York Bar;*" *Princeton Review*, 1838, p. 463.]

tory for Worship, Government, and Discipline. This Confession and this Directory were adopted by the Church of Scotland, and have ever since continued in authority in that Church. Under that constitution, the General Assembly of that Church has always acted as its parliament; exercising legislative, as well as judicial powers; making rules binding on synods, presbyteries, and churches, restrained by nothing but the word of God, the laws of the land, and its own written constitution. This fact is too notorious to need proof.* A greater absurdity could not be put into words, than the assertion that in Scotland, the General Assembly is "a mere appellate court and advisory council." That American Presbyterianism was originally the same with that of Scotland is proved by two incontestible facts; first, that our Church adopted identically the same constitution as the Church of Scotland; and secondly, that under that constitution, our highest judicatory claimed and exercised the same powers with the Scottish General Assembly. The Presbytery of Philadelphia was formed about 1704; in 1716, there were four presbyteries who erected themselves into a Synod. In 1729, this Synod passed what is called the "Adopting Act," by which the Westminster Confession of Faith was declared to be the confession of the faith of the Presbyterian Church.† Various causes led to a schism in this body, in the year 1741, when two synods, one of New York, the other of Philadelphia, were formed. They continued separated until 1758. When a re-union was effected, they came together upon definite terms, both as to doctrine and discipline. The first article of the terms of union is as follows. "Both synods, having

* See HILL'S INSTITUTES, pp. 229-241. This writer, who is the standard authority on the constitution of the Church of Scotland, describes the powers of the General Assembly as judicial, legislative, and executive, and says, p. 240, "In the exercise of these powers, the General Assembly often issues peremptory mandates, summoning individuals and inferior courts to appear at its bar. It sends precise order to particular judicatories, directing, assisting, or restraining them in the exercise of their functions, and its superintending, controlling authority maintains soundness of doctrine, checks irregularity, and enforces the observance of general laws throughout all districts of the Church."

† It is not necessary to enter into the controversy regarding this Act; as the dispute relates to doctrinal matters. We think it evident from various sources that the grand reason for qualifying the assent given to the Confession of Faith, was the doctrine which it then taught concerning civil magistrates. In 1786 "The Synod of New York and Philadelphia" declare that they "adopt, according to the known and established meaning of the terms, the Westminster Confession of Faith as the confession of their faith; save that every candidate for the gospel ministry is permitted to except against so much of the twenty-third chapter as gives authority to the civil magistrate in matters of religion." This solitary exception is certainly very significant. See *Digest*, p. 119.—[*Digest* of 1873, p. 50.]

always approved and received the Westminster Confession of Faith, larger and shorter Catechisms, as an orthodox and excellent system of Christian doctrine, founded upon the word of God; we do still receive the same, as the confession of our faith, and also the Plan of Worship, Government, and Discipline, contained in the Westminster Directory; strictly enjoining it on all our members and probationers for the ministry that they preach and teach according to the Form of sound words in the said Confession and Catechism, and avoid and oppose all errors contrary thereto." In another article it was declared that no minister was to be licensed or ordained, unless he "promise subjection to the Presbyterian Plan of Government in the Westminster Directory." *Digest*, p. 118. [*Digest* of 1873, p. 49.] Here is the first formal constitution of American Presbyterians, as a united body. This constitution, both as to faith and government, was precisely the same with that of the Church of Scotland. Has American Presbyterianism entirely lost its original character? Has the infusion of Congregationalism affected not only the principles of our members, but the essential features of our system? Do we live under an entirely different form of government, from that which was so solemnly adopted by our fathers? If this be so, if a revolution so radical has taken place, it can be, and it must be clearly demonstrated. This is not a matter to be asserted, or assumed. We shall proceed to prove that no such change has taken place.

The constitution, ratified at the time of the union of the two synods in 1758, continued in force about thirty years. In 1785, on motion, it was ordered, that Dr. Witherspoon, Dr. Rodgers, Mr. Robert Smith, Dr. Allison, Dr. Smith, Mr. Woodhull, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Latta, and Mr. Duffield,* with the moderator, be a committee to take into consideration the constitution of the Church of Scotland and other Protestant countries, and agreeably to the general principles of Presbyterian government, compile a system of general rules for the government of the Synod, and the several presbyteries under their inspection, and the people in their communion, and to make report of their proceedings therein at the next meeting of Synod.

In 1786, it was resolved, That the book of discipline and government be re-committed to a committee, who shall have powers to digest such a system as they shall think accommodated to the state of the Presbyterian Church in America—and every presbytery is hereby required to report in writing to the Synod, at their next meeting, their observa-

* We believe all these gentlemen were Scotch or Irish, either by birth, or immediate descent. Certainly they were not men to change Presbyterianism all of a sudden into Congregationalism.

tions on the said book of government and discipline. Dr. Witherspoon was the chairman of this committee also. In 1787, the Synod having gone through the consideration of the plan of government and discipline presented by the committee appointed the preceding year, ordered a thousand copies to be printed and sent down to the presbyteries for their consideration, and the consideration of the churches under their care.

Finally, in 1788, "The Synod having fully considered the draught of the Form of Government and Discipline, did, on the review of the whole, and hereby do, ratify and adopt the same, as now altered and amended, as the CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA; and order the same to be considered and strictly observed, as the rule of their proceedings, by all the inferior judicatories, belonging to this body.

"*Resolved*, That the true intent and meaning of the above ratification by the Synod is, that the Form of Government and Discipline and Confession of Faith, as now ratified, is to continue to be our constitution, and the confession of our faith and practice unalterably, unless two-thirds of the presbyteries under the care of the General Assembly shall propose alterations or amendments, and such alterations or amendments, shall be agreed to and enacted by the General Assembly." *Digest*, p. 117, &c., [*Digest* of 1873, p. 51].

We may commend, in passing, this minute to the special attention of those who are so fond of appealing to the *liberal* Presbyterianism of our fathers. Here we see the Synod, not merely making laws, but forming a CONSTITUTION by their own authority, and *ordering* all inferior judicatories to make it the rule by which to govern their proceedings. This constitution was not submitted to the presbyteries, except for their observations, exactly as it was submitted to the churches. Neither acted with any authority in the matter; it was formed and ratified by the Synod.

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And this is not all; this constitution was fixed UNALTERABLY, unless two-thirds of the presbyteries should propose alterations; and even then they could only propose; the alterations were to be ENACTED by the General Assembly, then just determined upon. Here, then, at the very birth of American Presbyterianism, we have the highest toned Scottish doctrine, of which the history of the parent Church can furnish an example. What higher exercise of ecclesiastical authority can there be, than the formation of a constitution?

* * * * * * * *

The first American constitution of the Presbyterian Church was formed, as already stated, in 1788. The only general principle in which it differed from that of the Church of Scotland, was the denial of the right of civil magistrates to interfere in matters of religion. Accordingly

those portions of the Confession of Faith which assert magistrates to have this right were altered; and in the answer to the question in the Larger Catechism, What is forbidden in the Second Commandment? the clause, "tolerating a false religion" was stricken out. The two leading points of difference as to government between our system and the Scottish are; first, that we have no body analogous to the "Commission of the General Assembly," which continues to meet, at certain times, after the adjournment of the Assembly, and exercises all its powers, subject, however, to the review of the next General Assembly. Originally this feature belonged to our system. In 1774, a minute was adopted by a large majority of the Synod, declaring the powers of such a commission, in order to remove the doubts which had prevailed on this subject. In this minute it is said: The Synod "do determine that the commission shall continue, and meet whensoever called by the moderator, at the request of the first nine on the roll of the commission, or the major part of the first nine ministers, and when met, that it shall be invested with all the powers of the Synod; and sit by their own adjournments from time to time; and let it also be duly attended to that there can lie no appeal from the judgment of the commission, as there can be none from the judgment of the Synod; but there may be a review of their proceedings and judgments by the Synod," &c. Digest, p. 45. Thus thorough-going was the conformity of American Presbyterianism in its origin to the Scottish model. This provision was not adopted in the new constitution. A second source of difference consists in the close relation which exists in Scotland between the Church and state. This has very materially modified their system. There are also various differences as to matters of detail. The ratio of representation of ministers and elders in the General Assembly is not equal, as it is with us; the universities and certain royal burghs send delegates, either ministers or elders; and ministers without charges, with a few exceptions, are not allowed to sit in presbytery. There is also considerable difference in practice between the two churches. The General Assembly here has not been accustomed, especially of late years, to interfere so much with the proceedings of the lower courts. As to all general principles and arrangements, however, the constitution of 1788 conformed to that which we had derived from Scotland. There are the same courts; the same subordination of the lower to the higher judicatories; and the same general statement of their respective powers and privileges.

The constitution of 1788, which was, in all its essential features, the same as that which had been previously in force, remained almost without alteration until the year 1804. In that year a committee appointed for the purpose, proposed a number of amendments, which they say in

their report, "are of such a nature, that if the whole of them should be adopted, they would not alter, but only explain, render more practicable, and bring nearer to perfection, the general system which has already gone into use." These amendments received the sanction of a majority of the presbyteries, and may be seen in pages 56 and 57 of the printed Minutes for that year. Most of them are merely verbal correcrections, and not one makes the least alteration in any one general principle of our system.

The revision of the constitution made in 1821, resulted in very numerous alterations. These, however, related either to mere phraseology, or to matters of form and detail; or were explanatory of preceding rules; or consisted of additional directions as to forms of process. There was no alteration designed or effected in the relation of our several courts to each other, or in their general powers.—Though we do not believe that there was any intention to enlarge the power of any of the judicatories, yet it so happens that the changes made, so far as they have any significancy, tend to increase the authority of the higher courts. Thus in the section on the power of synods, which state that they have authority to take such order respecting presbyteries, sessions, and people under their care, as may be in conformity with the word of God, the clause "and not contradictory to the decisions of the General Assembly" is stricken out, and the words "the established rules" put in its place. This alteration is an obvious improvement, as it is much more definite and intelligible, since the decisions of the Assembly may not have been uniform or consistent. And again, in the section on the powers of the Assembly, the comprehensive clause, (the power) "of superintending the concerns of the whole Church" is inserted.

We are giving ourselves, however, a great deal of unnecessary trouble in proving a negative. Let those who assert that Presbyterianism has, in this country, been completely emasculated, show when, how, and by whom it was done. Let them point out the process by which one form of government, known of all men as to its essential features, was transmuted into another. This pamphlet does not contain a shadow of such proof, either from the constitution, history, or practice of the Church. It is all bald assertion; assertion unrestricted by any knowledge of the subject, or by any modesty on the part of the writer. The reference made on p. 11 to our constitution, calls for no modification of the above remark; for the passage which is there imperfectly quoted has no relation to the point which it is cited to prove. We are told that, "The church session and presbytery alone have original jurisdiction. The synods and Assembly are merely courts of review,—appellate courts. They have none of them *legislative powers*. 'All Church power,' says the constitution, 'is only ministerial and declarative. The Holy Scrip-

tures are the only rule of faith and manners. No Church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws. The right of judging upon laws already made must be lodged with fallible men, and synods and councils may err, yet there is more danger from the *usurped claim of making laws.*' I am thus particular upon this point," adds the writer, "because the 'usurped claim of making laws' was actually set up, and these proceedings (of the Assembly of 1837) justified as legislative acts." We are far from supposing that the above passage from the constitution, printed as a continuous quotation, was garbled and patched with a design to deceive; but the fact is, that it is so garbled as to make the constitution assert the very reverse of what its authors intended, and what from their lips would be the height of absurdity. The passage stands thus in the introductory chapter, § 7. "That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative: *That is to say,* that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws, to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will be easily admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity; yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws, than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel; although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men." What is the power which is here denied? and to whom is it denied? It is the power "to make laws *to bind the conscience*" in virtue of human authority. Why? Because the Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners. The framers of our constitution meant to deny the claim set up by the Romish, and some other Churches, to legislate authoritatively on matters of faith and morals. The power of the Church, in such matters, is merely ministerial and declarative. She may declare what, according to the word of God, truth and duty are; but she cannot make any thing a matter of duty, which is not enjoined in the Scriptures. The laws of which they speak are "common to all those who profess the gospel;" such laws the Church can neither make nor repeal, she can only declare and administer. This power is denied not merely to our judicatories, but to the Church as a body. According to this writer, however, the power denied, is that of making laws of any kind. To sustain this assertion the proposition is made general; "No Church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws;" leaving out the restrictive clause "to bind the consciences in virtue of their own authority;" thus perverting the whole paragraph from its obvious meaning and design. This introductory chapter

to the Form of Government was prefixed to it in 1788, where it has stood ever since. We wonder that the absurdity did not occur to the writer, or to his clerical endorsers, of making a set of sane men gravely deny to the Church collectively, and to all of its judicatories, all legislative authority, while they were in the very act of ordaining a code of laws for the government of the Church. Is not our constitution a set of laws? Was it not enacted by the Church judicatories? Have they not the power to repeal, or modify it at pleasure? Yet they have no legislative authority! This is the kind of reasoning which we are called upon to answer.

Having shown that our Church at first adopted identically the same formulas of faith and government as the Church of Scotland; and that the successive modifications of the constitution in 1788, 1804, and 1821, left the essential principles of the system unchanged, we might dismiss this part of the subject entirely. But it is so important, and the ignorance respecting it, as it would seem, is so great and general, that we will proceed to the other sources of proof, and demonstrate from the constitution as it now stands, and from the uniform practice of the Church, the utter unsoundness of this new theory of Presbyterianism.

This theory is, that our judicatories have no legislative power; that they are severally independent of each other, as to their existence and action; and that the higher courts are merely appellate courts and advisory councils. In the 31st chap. of the Confession of Faith, sect. 2, it is said, "IT BELONGETH to synods and councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his Church; to receive complaints in cases of mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his word."* It is here taught, as plain as language can speak, that synods and councils have power to set down rules for the government of the Church, which, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission out of respect to the authority by which they are made. With regard to matters of faith and conscience their power is ministerial; with regard to matters of discipline and government it is legisla-

* The proof passage cited in the margin is Acts 16: 4. "And as they went through the cities they delivered unto them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained by the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem."

tive. "To set down rules" is to make laws, as we presume no one will deny. Let it be considered that this is not a passing declaration. It is an article of faith found in the Westminster Confession, which our Church has always adopted as the confession of her faith; and to which every Presbyterian minister and elder has subscribed. This is the faith of the Church as to the authority of synods. Yet we are told in the very face of this first principle of our system, that synods or councils have no legislative power; that they cannot "set down rules" for the government of the Church; that their only power is judicial or advisory!

This power of the Church resides, according to our Confession, in synods or councils, and is inherent in them. This is not indeed a peculiarity of our Church; it is, with the exception of the comparatively small body of Congregationalists, the faith of the Christian world, and always has been. Provincial, national, and œcumenical synods have always claimed and exercised the right of making canons, or ecclesiastical laws, obligatory on all within their jurisdiction. In our system we have councils of various kinds, the Session, Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly, and they all, in virtue of their very nature, as councils, have this authority, limited in all cases by the word of God, and restricted by the peculiarities of our constitution.

A Session is a parochial or congregational council charged with "the spiritual government" of a particular church. They may make what rules they see fit for the government of the congregation, not inconsistent with the constitution. This power they exercise every day; making rules about the admission of members, and other matters; which are nowhere prescribed in the constitution, and which are probably not always consistent with it. The next highest council is the Presbytery. It has charge of the government of the churches within a certain district. It makes rules binding on them; as for example, forbiding a congregation to call or to dismiss a pastor without its consent. This power is not derived from the constitution. It existed when there was but one presbytery; and would exist if all the presbyteries were independent of each other. To them it belongs to license, ordain, install, remove and judge ministers. So far from deriving this power from the constitution, it is thereby greatly restricted. They cannot license and ordain whom they please, but those only who have certain prescribed qualifications.

The Synod is in fact a larger presbytery, and would have precisely the same authority, did not the constitution, for the sake of convenience make a distinction of powers between it and the presbyteries. A synod is not called to exercise the power of licensing, ordaining, &c. &c., because this power can better be exercised by smaller councils. It has

jurisdiction not only as an appellate court, but as a court of review and control. It can order the presbyteries to produce their records; it can "redress whatever has been done by presbyteries contrary to order; and take effectual care that presbyteries observe the constitution of the Church . . . and generally take such order with respect to the presbyteries, sessions and people under their care, as may be in conformity with the word of God and the established rules, and which tend to promote the edification of the Church." Chap. 11. § 4.

The General Assembly is the highest judicatory of the Presbyterian Church, and "represents, in one body, all the particular churches of this denomination." To it belongs, therefore, the power which the Confession of Faith ascribes to all synods, restricted by the provisions of the constitution. It can make no regulation infringing on the privileges of the lower courts; nor can it in any way alter or add to the code of constitutional rules. But its power as the supreme court of appeals, review and control continues. It is charged with "superintending the concerns of the whole Church," and with "suppressing schismatical contentions and disputations." See chap. 12. "It may send missions to any part to plant churches, or to supply vacancies; and, for this purpose, *may direct any presbytery* to ordain evangelists, or ministers, without relation to particular churches." Chap. 18. This would be strange language in reference to a mere advisory council! The power, here recognised as belonging to the General Assembly, will appear to be the greater, if we remember that the ordination of any minister *sine titulo* was considered as hardly consistent with presbyterial principles; and that the presbyteries were very adverse to admit it. Yet the Assembly is acknowledged to have the power to direct them to do it.

In exercising the right of supervision and control, the higher courts, depend, in general, on the regular means of information which they possess in the review of the records of the inferior judicatories, and in the exercise by those aggrieved of the right of appeal, reference and complaint. In case, however, of neglect, unfaithfulness, or irregularity of a lower court, a higher one has the right, when well advised of the existence of these evils, "to take cognizance of the same; and to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter, as completely as if it had been recorded, and thus brought up by the review of records."* That is, it is incumbent on them, as the constitution expresses it, to take effectual care that the lower judicatories observe the constitution of the Church.

Such is Presbyterianism as laid down in our Confession of Faith and Form of Government. Such it was in the days of our fathers, and

* Book II. chap. 7. § 1. par. 5

such we trust it will long continue to be. We shall now proceed to adduce some small portion of the overwhelming evidence with which our records abound, that this has always been the interpretation put upon our system of government; and that this modern theory of mere appellate jurisdiction and advisory power is unsustained by the practice, as it is by the standards of the Church.

No one can open the records of the proceedings either of the old Synod, or of the General Assembly, without being struck with the fact that the phraseology adopted is inconsistent with the idea that those bodies claimed merely advisory powers. It is competent to a body having authority to command, to recommend or advise; but it is not competent to a body having power only to give advice, to "direct," "order," or "enjoin." Yet such language is used from the beginning to the end of our records. These orders relate to all manner of subjects, and are given not only when the higher judicatory acted as a court of reference or appeals, but also in its character of the superintending and governing body. It is not worth while, however, to adduce evidence of this kind, because this phraseology will be found incorporated in passages cited for a more important purpose; and because it is so settled that we find even the New School Assembly, at their late meeting, resolving, 1. "That presbyteries are hereby REQUIRED to cause each church and congregation under their care and jurisdiction to make an annual contribution to the contingent fund of the General Assembly. 2. That the presbyteries are ENJOINED to send a copy of the above preamble and resolution to the several churches under their care, &c." This is certainly strange language in which to convey advice.

The examples we shall cite of the exercise of authority on the part of the higher judicatories, do not admit of being arranged under distinct heads. The same example will often prove all the several points in dispute; the legislative power of Church courts; the authority of the higher over the lower; and the right of the supreme judicatory to take effectual care that the constitution be observed in all parts of the Church.

In 1758, by a joint act at the time of their union, the old synods of Philadelphia and New York, ordered "That no presbytery shall license or ordain to the work of the ministry any candidate, until he give them competent satisfaction as to his learning, and experimental acquaintance with religion, and skill in divinity and cases of conscience, and declare his acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, as the confession of his faith, and promise subjection to the Presbyterian plan of government in the Westminster Directory," *Digest* p. 119. [*Digest*, of 1873, p. 49.] As this resolution, which was one

of the terms of union between the two synods, was adopted first by one synod and then by the other; and then unanimously by the two united, there could hardly have been a man in the Church who denied the legislative and controlling power of the higher courts.

In 1764, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia "established a rule," giving particular directions to the presbyteries, with regard to candidates for the ministry; in 1792, the Assembly confirmed it, by *enjoining*, "in the most pointed manner, on the Synod of Philadelphia, to give particular attention that no presbytery under their care depart, in any respect, from that rule of the former Synod of New York and Philadelphia, which is," &c. Then follows the rule, p. 63.

In the same year the old Synod adopted another rule, which we commend to the attention of those who long for the Presbyterianism of former times: "Though the Synod entertain a high regard for the Associated Churches of New England, yet we cannot but judge, that students who go to them, or to any other than our own presbyteries, to obtain license, in order to return and officiate among us, act very irregularly and *are not to be approved or employed by our presbyteries;* as hereby we are deprived of the right of trying and approving of the qualifications of our own candidates; yet if any cases shall happen, where such conduct may be thought necessary for the greater good of any congregation, it shall be laid before the presbytery to which the congregation belongs, and approved by them." p. 65.

In 1764, the old Synod also adopted a rule for the government of Presbyteries in the reception of foreign ministers and licentiates. This rule was explained in 1765; and in 1774 they adopted a set of regulations which were unanimously approved. The following is an extract: "In order more effectually to preserve this Synod, our presbyteries and congregations from imposition and abuse, every year, when any presbytery may report that they have received any minister or probationer from a foreign Church, that presbytery shall lay before the Synod the testimonials and other certificates, upon which they received such minister or probationer, for the satisfaction of the Synod, before such minister or probationer shall be considered as a member of our body. And if the Synod shall find such testimonials false or insufficient, the whole proceedings held by the presbytery on the admission shall be held to be void; and the presbytery shall not, from that time, receive or acknowledge him as a member of this body, or as in ministerial communion with us," p. 286. Let it be observed that these regulations were *unanimously* approved; and yet what power do they suppose the Synod to possess over the presbyteries; denying to the lower courts the right of judging for themselves whether a member was qualified or not; and

pronouncing their decision void *ab initio*, if it should meet the approbation of the higher court.

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In 1794, at the request of the Synod of Philadelphia, the Assembly divided the Presbytery of Carlisle; in 1802 the Presbytery of Albany requested to be divided, which request the Assembly granted (see pp. 55, 57); and in 1805 the Assembly divided the Presbytery of Oneida, *constituting* the one portion into the Presbytery of Geneva, and the other into the Presbytery of Oneida, directing them where to hold their first meeting, &c. See Minutes, vol. II. p. 82. We do not pretend to give more than specimens of the jurisdiction and power unhesitatingly exercised by the Assembly in former days.

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In 1795, a request was overtured that the synods of Virginia and the Carolinas *have liberty* to direct their presbyteries to ordain such candidates as they may judge necessary to appoint on missions to preach the gospel; whereupon, "*Resolved*, That the above request be granted. The synods being careful to restrict the permission to the ordination of such candidates only as are engaged to be sent on missions," p. 48.

In 1798, the Synod of the Carolinas presented to the Assembly certain references and inquiries relating to a creed published by the Rev. H. B.; which were referred to a committee, of which Dr. M'Whorter, of Newark, was chairman. This committee made a report, stating that Mr. B. is erroneous "in making *disinterested benevolence* the only definition of holiness," and that he "has confounded self-love with selfishness." On the third article the committee remark, "that the transfer of personal sin or righteousness has never been held by any Calvinistic divines, nor by any person in our Church as far as is known to us; and therefore that Mr. B.'s observations on this subject appear to be either nugatory or calculated to mislead." They condemn, however, his doctrine of original sin, as "in effect setting aside the idea of Adam's being the federal head or representative of his descendants, and the whole doctrine of the covenant of works." They say also, "that Mr. B. is greatly erroneous in asserting that the formal cause of a believer's justification is the imputation of the fruits or effects of Christ's righteousness, and not that righteousness itself." These are the principal errors specified. The committee recommend, "that Mr. B. be required to acknowledge before the Assembly that he was wrong in publishing his creed; that in the particulars specified above, he renounce the errors therein pointed out; that he engage to teach nothing hereafter of a similar nature, &c. &c.; and that if Mr. B. submit to this he be considered in good standing with the Church." This re-

port was adopted,* and Mr. B. having been called before the Assembly, and allowed time for consideration, made a declaration containing the required acknowledgments, retractions, and engagements, and was then pronounced in good standing. *Digest*, pp. 129—134, [*Digest* of 1873, pp. 220—222.]

This case is cited as an illustration of the kind of supervision formerly exercised by our supreme judicatory. On the mere reference by a lower court, in relation to a certain publication, it is taken up and examined, certain erroneous propositions extracted, and the author immediately called up and required to retract them on the penalty of being turned out of the Church.

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In 1799, a committee presented a report containing sundry recommendations and injunctions respecting the qualifications of candidates for the ministry; the support of ministers; contributions to missions, &c. This report being read it was resolved, "That it be approved and adopted; and ordered that the several synods, presbyteries, and individual churches, as far as they are respectively concerned, govern themselves accordingly." p. 81.

The Presbytery of Cumberland having "licensed and ordained a number of persons not possessing the qualifications required by our book of discipline, and *without explicit adoption of the Confession of Faith*," it was for these and other irregularities dissolved by the Synod of Kentucky, and the irregularly ordained ministers suspended without process. When these facts came up before the Assembly, on a review of the records of the synod, the Assembly addressed that judicatory a letter, in which their zeal and decision were commended, but the opinion expressed that the suspension of ordained ministers without process, was "at least of doubtful regularity." This letter was written in 1807. We find no mention of this case in 1808, either in the Digest or in the printed Minutes for that year. But in 1809 there is a record to this effect: "That the Assembly took into consideration a letter from the Synod of Kentucky; and having carefully reviewed

* Two members only dissented, of whom one was Mr. Langdon, a delegate from the General Association of Connecticut. This record is in many points of view instructive. We see that doctrines, which are taught in our day with perfect impunity, were formerly regarded as entirely inconsistent with a good standing in the Church. It is foreign from our present purpose, but we should be glad to have an opportunity at some future time, to produce some of the evidence with which our history abounds, that our Church was for a long series of years more strict in demanding conformity to our doctrinal standards than it is now; and that as it became lax in matters of government, it became *pari passu* lax in doctrine.

the same, and also having read another letter from their records, which by accident was detained from the last Assembly," &c., they declared themselves "perfectly satisfied with the conduct of the synod, and thank them for their firmness and zeal." p. 140. Here then is a synod receiving thanks for dissolving a presbytery, which, according to the new theory of Presbyterianism, was entirely independent of it, and for exercising the right of suspending, instanter, ministers irregularly ordained.

In 1809, the Assembly resolved, "That it be again solemnly enjoined on all presbyteries and synods within the bounds of the General Assembly, on no account to interfere with the instructions given by the Committee of Missions to missionaries." p. 50. What a controlling superintendence and authority is assumed in this resolution!

In 1809 the Assembly resolved "That it be and is hereby required of all presbyteries within the bounds of the General Assembly, annually to call up and examine the sessional records of the several churches under their care, as directed in the book of discipline." In the following year "the presbyteries were called upon to report what attention they had severally paid to the order of the General Assembly in relation to sessional records. Upon inquiry it appeared that the presbyteries had almost universally complied with the order." A committee was appointed to consider this subject, who brought in a report, which was read and adopted, and is as follows: "The Assembly, after seriously reviewing the order of the last Assembly, can by no means rescind the said order; inasmuch as they consider it as founded on the constitution of the Church, and as properly resulting from the obligation on the highest judicatory of the Church, *to see that the constitution be duly regarded*, yet as it is alleged that insisting on the rigid execution of this order with respect to some church sessions would not be for edification, the Assembly are by no means disposed to urge any presbytery to proceed under this order beyond what they may consider prudent and useful." p. 73. It is here taken for granted, and appealed to as a justification for a particular act, that the obligation rests on the highest judicatory of the Church "to see that the constitution be duly regarded."

In 1810, the Presbytery of Hartford *requested leave* to ordain Mr. Robert Sample *sine titulo*, whereupon the Assembly resolved "That said presbytery *be permitted* to ordain Mr. Sample, if they judge it expedient."

Page 214 of the Digest contains this record. "The following extract from the minutes of the Presbytery of Oneida was overtured, viz.: 'Ordered that our commissioners to the next General Assembly be instructed to request the Assembly (*risum teneatis amici*) to permit this

presbytery to manage their own missionary concerns.'" Was this humble request granted? Not at all. The presbytery was referred to the Board of Missions! This was so recently as 1818, and proves how much of the old spirit of Presbyterianism was still alive in the Church. * * * * * * * * * *

So rapidly and so completely has the spirit of our Church changed, that we do not believe there is now a presbytery in our land, which would not consider itself insulted by a proposal that they should *request permission* to manage their own missionary concerns.

The whole history of this subject of missions is full of instruction as to the relation in which the Assembly was regarded as standing to the Church. That judicatory, for a long time, appointed the missionaries by name, assigned them their field of labor; if they were pastors, the Assembly either appointed supplies for their pulpits, during their tour of duty, directing such a minister to preach on such a Sabbath, or they directed the presbytery to make the requisite appointments for this purpose.* In short they exercised without let or contradiction, a superintending control of the whole Church, ordering synods, presbyteries and individual ministers as familiarly as any presbytery ever does its own members.

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The power of the Assembly to make rules for the government of the Church, is assumed, in the clearest manner, in that section which forbids their making "constitutional rules" without the consent of the presbyteries. That section, in the old book, is labeled "Restriction of the power of the Assembly." Why restrict the exercise of a power which does not exist? Why say the Assembly shall not make a particular class of rules, if it can make no rules at all? There is however an authoritative exposition of the meaning of this section which establishes the legislative power of the Assembly beyond dispute. In 1798 the General Assembly adopted certain "regulations intended to embrace and extend the existing rules, respecting the reception of foreign

* See, for example, pp. 132, 133 of vol. II. of the Minutes. "Resolved, That Rev. John H. Rice spend two months as a missionary, &c. That Rev. John Lyle serve two months, &c. That the Presbytery of New York be authorized to employ a missionary to be paid out of the funds of the Assembly. That the Presbytery of Geneva take measures for appointing supplies for Mr. Chapman's pulpit. That Mr. Alexander, Mr. Todd, and Mr. John H. Rice, be a committee to appoint supplies for Mr. Rice's pulpit," &c. &c. &c. And on p. 16, "Resolved, That the following ministers be appointed, and they hereby are appointed, to supply the pulpits of Dr. Read and Mr. Arthur during their missionary tour—Mr. Collins first Sabbath, Mr. Latta the second," &c. &c.

ministers and licentiates." These regulations* effectually control the action of the presbyteries, forbidding them to receive any foreign minister or probationer "on a mere certificate of good standing;" prescribing the kind of trials to which he shall be subjected; directing that he should be received in the first instance, only on probation, and not be allowed to vote in any judicatory, or accept of any call for settlement; requiring this probation to continue for at least one year; directing the presbytery then to take up the case, renew the examination, and determine "to receive him, to reject him, or to hold him under further probation." In case the applicant was received, the presbytery was to report the case with all the evidence to the synod or General Assembly, who were "to come to a final judgment, either to receive him into the Presbyterian body agreeably to his standing, or to reject him," notwithstanding his reception by the presbytery. Here then is the exercise of legislative authority over the whole Church; here is control of presbyteries as to the exercise of their own rights; here is an instance of the way in which the supreme judicatory felt authorized to take care that the constitution should be observed in all parts of the Church. Was this exercise of power sustained? We shall see. In the following year, that is, in 1799, the Presbytery of New York objected to these regulations, and requested the General Assembly to rescind them. This request was refused. The principal objection urged against them by the presbytery was, that the constitution provides that before any *standing rules* should be obligatory on the churches, they must be submitted to the presbyteries. To this the Assembly answered; that "standing rules," in the sense of the Book, were "articles of the constitution, which when once established are unalterable by the Assembly." Such rules the Assembly cannot make. But to say that it cannot make of its own authority any rules binding on the churches, "would be to reduce this Assembly to a mere committee to prepare business upon which the presbyteries might act. It would undo, with few exceptions, all the rules that have been established by this Assembly since its first institution. . . . . Besides *standing rules*, in the evident sense of the constitution, cannot be predicated of any act made by the Assembly, and repealable by it, because they are limited from their very nature to the duration of a year, if it please the Assembly to exert the *power inherent* in it at all times to alter or annul them, and they continue to be rules only by the Assembly's not using its power of repeal." In order to prevent all doubt on this subject in future, the Assembly proposed to the presbyteries this article of the constitution for "their interpretation," and advised them to strike out the word *standing* and to insert the word *constitutional*.

* See printed Minutes for 1798.

This alteration the presbyteries accordingly made; and the expression "constitutional rules" remains to this day.* Can there be a clearer proof than this of the legislative authority of the Assembly, or of its official acknowledgment by the presbyteries? Let it be remembered that this was no new claim on the part of the Assembly of 1798. The same power had been always claimed and exercised by the old Synod and by the General Assembly from its first institution.

It is time, however, to bring these citations to an end. We should have to transcribe the records of the Church bodily, if we were to exhibit all the evidence which they contain on this subject. The origin, the constitution, the uniform practice of our Church, therefore, prove that our judicatories are not independent of each other; that the higher bodies are not mere courts of appeal and advisory councils; but that it belongs to them to set down rules for the government of the Church, which, if consonant with the word of God, and our written constitution, are to be received with reverence and submission out of regard to the authority of these courts. It is their duty to take effectual care that the constitution is observed in all parts of the Church.

The doctrines of this pamphlet are not only inconsistent with the origin, constitution and practice of the Church, they are moreover absolutely destructive of its character. According to the constitution, the General Assembly is the bond of union and confidence between all the churches. It makes us one denomination. It is such a bond, by enabling the whole Church, of which it is the representative, to take effectual care that the constitution, as to doctrine and order, is observed within all our bounds. But according to the new theory, we are not one denomination; we are an aggregate of a number of independent presbyteries. "If a presbytery license, ordain, or receive a minister, or organize or acknowledge a church, * * * * the act must be forever valid, however ill-advised or censurable it may be." p. 9.† The whole Church then is completely at the mercy of one presbytery.

*See *Digest*, p. 285—290. [*Digest* of 1873, pp. 325, 326].

† We see on p. 29 of this Review a reference to a decision of the General Assembly in 1816, in support of this doctrine. The Presbytery of Geneva having improperly admitted a minister, were ordered by the synod to reconsider its decision. The Assembly disapproved of this order, and say, "That the right of deciding on the fitness of admitting Mr. Wells a constituent member of the Presbytery of Geneva, belonged to the presbytery itself, and that having admitted him, no matter how improvidently, their decision was valid and final . . . . the presbytery could not, though it should reconsider, reverse its own decision, or in any way sever the member so admitted, from their body, except by regular process." *Digest*, p. 324. This decision has nothing to do with the case in hand. There is all the difference in the world between an *improvident* act, and an un-

Certain presbyteries in the northwest have formed or acknowledged some three or four hundred Congregational churches; and in spite of the constitution, in spite of the contract between the presbyteries, in defiance of the authority of the General Assembly, these churches must forever remain invested with all the privileges of Presbyterian congregations; thus introducing into our judicatories and into the constituency of the General Assembly, three or four hundred men who do not adopt our standards either of doctrine or government. On this principle, if the Third Presbytery of New York, in the excess of its liberality, were to acknowledge all the Baptist churches of its own city, or all the Unitarian churches of Boston, the act would be valid, and these churches be forever entitled to representation in the Presbyterian body. Or if a presbytery become Socinian there is no help for it. They would not sustain charges against their own members; and they cannot be tried, dissolved or disowned as a body. Neither synod nor General Assembly has power to enforce the constitution. They can only look on in silence, and see this presbytery increase year after year, and sending Socinian ministers and elders to the General Assembly of a Calvinistic Church. It is enough to awake the ashes of our fathers to have such doctrines set forth as Presbyterianism, in the bosom of the Church which they founded with so much care, and guarded with so much strictness. This is not Presbyterianism; and those who maintain these opinions are not Presbyterians.

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constitutional one. The member in question was objected to as of "suspicious character." It is one thing to turn a man out of the Church or presbytery on the ground of character, without process; and another to set aside his admission as unconstitutional. Because a presbytery has a right to judge of the qualification of its own members, it does not follow that it may admit a man without ordination, or without the adoption of the standards. Any such act may be declared void at once; and the member be excluded. It was thus that the Synod of Kentucky suspended from the ministry in our Church, men ordained without having adopted the Confession of Faith, and were thanked for so doing by the General Assembly. And in 1798 it was decided that elders unconstitutionally ordained, remained private members of the Church. See *Digest*, p. 322. [See *Digest* of 1873, p. 337.]

CHAPTER XII.

A PARTICULAR CHURCH.

§ 1. The Session says who are Church Members.[*]

[Form of Gov., chap. ix., sec. vi.—*Comp. Digest* of 1873, pp. 127, 129, 574.]

[Overture No. 3] was a memorial from the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia asking the General Assembly to take such action in the case of members of the Church who remove, without certificate, or who fail, for a length of time, to attend upon the ordinances of the gospel, as will secure constitutional and uniform action throughout the Presbyterian churches.

"As there is no provision in our Form of Government, or Discipline, to meet such cases, and as it would be inexpedient for the General Assembly to make a regulation on the snbject, which would have the force of a constitutional rule, the Committee on Bills and Overtures recommended that the following be sent down to the presbyteries for their decision:

"Shall the form of government be amended by adding this clause at the end of chapter 9?

"Sec. 6. They shall also have power to remove from the list of communicants, those who by long continned absence, without a regular dismission or other equivalent causes, are improper persons to be retained as members of the Church." [The recommendation was laid on the table.]

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It seems to us that there is a wrong principle in this overture and in the answer which it was proposed should be given to it. There are two distinct theories respecting our ecclesiastical constitution. The one is that it is the grant of powers; the other is that it is a limitation of powers, *i. e.*, a treaty entered into by primary Church organizations as to the manner in which they shall exercise the powers inherent in them and derived from Christ. The latter is unquestionably the true view. A Church session does not derive its power to admit members or exercise discipline from the constitution. The constitution simply states that such and such powers pertain to a Church session; and the various Church sessions embraced under the constitution agree to ex-

[*From Article on "*The General Assembly*"; Topic, "*Overture No. 3.—On Church Members;*" *Princeton Review*, 1850, p. 468.]

ercise those powers in a certain way. Neither does a presbytery derive from the constitution the right to ordain or to depose from the ministry. If independent it could exercise those rights at discretion; but when associated with other presbyteries interested in its acts, it stipulates that it will ordain only under such and such circumstances. The reason of this is obvious, a man ordained by one presbytery becomes, as a member of synod, a judge over the members of other presbyteries. They therefore, have a right to a voice in the matter. Hence all presbyteries thus associated enter into an agreement as to what qualifications they will demand in candidates for ordination, and in general as to the principles on which they will exercise their presbyterial powers. And such an agreement is their constitution. It is not therefore a grant of powers, but a stipulation between the associated presbyteries as to the manner in which they will exercise the powers inherent in them. It follows from this that a session or presbytery is simply bound by contract not to violate the constitution, but the exercise of its prerogatives is not circumscribed by that instrument. It can do what it pleases, as a Church court, provided it infringes on no article of its contract with other courts, and on no principle of the word of God. It has no need therefore to go to the General Assembly to ask power to do what from its very nature as a Church court it has the right to do. A session must have a right to say who are the members of the church over which it presides. It might as well ask for power to erase from its roll the names of the dead, as to seek authority to say that those who have left them and wandered off no one knows where, have left them, and are no longer under their watch and care. The memorial, however, seems to assume that no session has any power in the premises but what it derives from the constitution; and the committee of Bills and Overtures proposed to add a section to that instrument to the effect that Church sessions "shall have power to remove from the list of communicants those who from long absence," &c., as though such assumption were correct. According to our view the sessions have all the power they need in this matter inherent in themselves, and we therefore rejoice that the overture was rejected by the Assembly.

§ 2. Validity of Romish Baptism. [*]

[*Directory for Worship.* chap. vii., sec. 1.—*Digest* of 1873, pp. 660–663.]

The question as to the validity of baptism as administered by a Roman Catholic priest was brought before the Assembly, by an overture from the Presbytery of Ohio, which gave rise to a long and interesting

[* From Article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic same; *Princeton Review*, 1845, p. 444.]

debate. Drs. Junkin and N. Rice, Professor Thornwell, Dr. McGill, and others advocated the negative of the question; Dr. Lord, Mr. Aitken, and a few others the affirmative. In favour of returning a negative answer to the question, the votes were 169, against 8, *non liquet* 6. We feel almost overwhelmed by such a vote. Any decision of the General Assembly is entitled to great respect, but a decision sustained by such a majority, almost imposes silence on all dissentients. And yet we believe it will take the Church by surprise. Men will be disposed to ask what new light has been discovered? What stern necessity has induced the Assembly to pronounce Calvin, Luther, and all the men of that generation, as well as thousands who with no other than Romish baptism have since been received into the Protestant Churches, to have lived and died unbaptized? The suddenness with which this decision has been made will add not a little to the surprise and regret with which it will be received. The judgment has come before the argument. We do not doubt that the brethren who urged the course adopted by the Assembly, have examined the subject, but we are very sure the Church has not. We question whether one in twenty of our ministers have ever given it more than a passing consideration. Yet as the Assembly professes to speak in the name of the whole Church, it would seem proper that no decision so important and so deeply affecting the character of the whole body in the eyes of Christendom, should be pronounced, until means had been taken to ascertain the views of the Church generally. The Assembly has indeed the right to resolve all questions of casuistry, regularly presented, and to give advice to the lower courts when requested. We do not question the right. We only venture to question the wisdom of giving an answer suddenly, in opposition to all previous practice, and to the principles of every other protestant Church. The fact that the answer is new, creates a reason for being slow to pronounce it. Had a judicial case been presented involving such a question, the Assembly would have been bound to give judgment according to its conscience. But we conceive the cases to be rare, in which it can be right to take up a question *in thesi*, and to enunciate a dictum at variance with all previously adopted principles and usage. We are very sure the United States court would be very slow to enunciate, without necessity, a principle of law in opposition to all precedent in that and all similar courts.

We shall very briefly and respectfully state the reasons, which constrain us to dissent from the decision that Romish baptism is invalid. We could do this, to our own satisfaction at least, by simply asking, What is baptism? "It is a sacrament, wherein the washing of water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of

the covenant of grace, and our engagements to be the Lord's." There are three essential points included in this definition.

1st. Baptism is a washing with water. Hence a washing with sand, wine, oil, or milk is not baptism. Instances are recorded in which men baptized in the desert with sand, have been re-baptized; and great surprise was expressed at Beza's declaration; *Ego quovis alio liquore non minus rite, quam aqua baptizarem, Epist. II. ad Tillium.* Water, however, by common consent is essential to the ordinance, because it is commanded, and because it belongs to the significancy of the rite.

2d. But not every washing with water is the Christian ordinance of baptism, it must be a washing in the name of the Trinity. Hence washing with water by an anti-trinitarian, is not baptism. When the controversy first arose in the Church about the baptism of heretics, there were two extreme opinions. Cyprian, and those African bishops who were under his influence, took the ground that the baptism of all those who separated from the outward communion of the Catholic Church, whether for heresy or schism, was null and void. In this view the bishops of Asia Minor generally coincided; a fact easily accounted for as all the heretics with whom they were in conflict denied the very essentials of the gospel. Stephen, bishop of Rome, went to the opposite extreme, admitting the baptism of all kinds of heretics to be valid. Both parties soon settled down upon middle ground. In the council of Arles, A. D. 314, when nearly two hundred bishops were present, it was determined; "If any one return from his heresy to the Church, let the Catholic priest question him about the creed; and if they perceive that he was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, only the imposition of hands shall be given him, that he may receive the Holy Ghost. But if upon examination, he answers not the Trinity, (that is, that he was not baptized in the name of the Trinity,) let him be re-baptized." To the same effect was the decision of the great council of Nice, which directed that the Novatians should be received without baptism, but required a repetition of the rite in the case of the disciples of Paul of Samosata. There was subsequently a dispute whether baptism by those Arians who retained the orthodox formula was valid or not. "The more general and prevailing interpretation of the Nicene canon was, that the baptism of all heretics and schismatics, who did not reject the Catholic form of baptizing in the name of the Trinity, was to be received, however they might be heterodox in their faith and opinions. This was certainly the sense of the council of Laodicea, of the second general council of Constantinople, and the second council of Arles and Trullo; as also of St. Austin, St. Jerome, Gennadius, Ursinus Afer, Siricius, Leo, Innocentius, the

author under the name of Justin Martyr, and the generality of the ancients." *

Protestants have not gone to this length, as they require a professed faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, in order to the validity of baptism, because it is from its nature an act of worship of the Triune God. With one accord, however, they have acquiesced in the judgment of the ancient Church, that the baptism of heretics is not void on account of heresy, provided they retain the doctrine of the Trinity, and baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. This is the doctrine of the Lutheran Church, see Gerhard's *Loci Communes*, vol. 9. L. 21. c. 4., where he sustains the practice of his Church, by quoting the words of Anselm: "*Baptisma a quocunque datum fuerit, sive a bono sive a malo, sive a Catholico, sive ab haeretico juxta morem ecclesiæ in nomine Patris, Filii et Spiritus sancti, tantundem valet.*"

The same doctrine as to baptism by heretics was held by the French and Geneva Churches. See Turrettin, vol. iii. p. 442. "Some heretics," he says, "corrupt the very substance of baptism, as the ancient Arians, modern Socinians, rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity; others, retaining the essentials of the ordinance and the true doctrine of the Trinity, err as to other doctrines, as formerly the Novatians and Donatists, and now the Papists and Arminians. The baptisms of the former class are to be rejected; those of the latter are retained, although they err as to many doctrines, and their baptisms, in circumstantials, are polluted by various ceremonies." See also Pictet, *La Theologie Chretienne*, Lib. xv. c. 13. The Church of Holland adopted the same view; see Morus, *Commentarius Perpetuus*, &c., vol. v. p. 448. *Docetur esse distinguendam hæresin; a. abditam et professione externa expressam; b. retinentem essentialia baptismi, et evertentem eadem: adeo ut baptismus administratur in nomen Dei Triunius veri agniti vel fiat luto, quo perit analogia inter signum et rem signatam aut non fiat in nomine Dei Triunius, sed in coetu antitrinitario. In posteriori casu baptismus repetendus censetur, non in priori.* No one questions this being the doctrine of the Church of England, since her practice on the subject has been uniform, and sustained by the highest judicial decisions. It is, therefore, the doctrine of the universal Church, that baptism administered in the name of the Trinity, by one professing faith in that doctrine, is not void on account of heresy. Such is the doctrine of our standards which declares baptism to be a washing with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The ground of this universally received view of the subject is obvious. The validity of baptism depends upon the

* See Bingham's Scholastic History of Lay Baptism, c. I. in his *Origines Ecclesiae*, and Neander's History, vol. I. pp. 565—577, German edition.

appointment of God, and not upon the character or faith of the administrator; and therefore, any baptism which is administered according to His appointment, the Church has felt constrained to admit to be baptism.

3. There is, however, a third particular included in this definition of baptism; it must be with the design "to signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking the benefits of the covenant of grace and our engagements to be the Lord's." There are two things included in this statement; participation of the benefits of the covenant, and the avowal of our purpose to be the Lord's. No washing with water, even if in the name of the Trinity, is Christian baptism, unless administered with the ostensible design of signifying, sealing and applying the benefits of the covenant of grace. This is what the ancient Church meant by "intention" as essential to this ordinance; and which the papists have characteristically perverted. By intention, they mean the secret purpose of the priest; against which view of the doctrine, all Protestants protested, as one of the devices of the man of sin, to make the people dependent on the priesthood. The ancient and true doctrine is that intention refers to the ostensible and professed design of the administration. No washing with water, in the name of the Trinity, therefore, is baptism, if done in sport, or mockery, or with the professed design of healing the sick, or raising the dead. It must be with the professed, ostensible intention of complying with the command of Christ, and of doing what he requires to be done, by those who accept the covenant of grace. From this it follows, that no baptism administered by a Jew, a pagan, a child, or an idiot, can be valid, because in all such cases, the requisite design must be absent. A Jew cannot, being such, join in an act of Christian worship, for he would thereby cease to be a Jew. As baptism includes the invocation of the Trinity, as a religious act, no man who does not profess to believe in the Trinity, can profess to join in such act.

The doctrine of our standards, therefore, is the precise doctrine of the ancient Church, viz., that there are three things essential to baptism; the matter, form, and intention. The matter, is the washing with water; the form, washing in the name of the Trinity; the intention, not the popish notion of the secret purpose of the priest, but the professed ostensible design of the act. When these three things are found, there, according to our standards, and the common doctrine of the Church, is baptism.

Such being the formal and authoritative definition of the rite, in order to determine in any given case, whether any particular baptism is valid, all we have to do is, to ask whether it has these essential characteristics. Is it a washing with water? Is it administered in the

name of the Trinity? Is the professed design of the rite to signify, seal and apply the benefits of the new covenant? If so, then, by our standards, it is baptism. To determine the question before us, we must, therefore, ascertain whether,

1st. Romish baptism is a washing with water? The Romish catechism defines baptism to be "The sacrament of regeneration by water with the word." In answer to the question, What is the matter of baptism? the Romish theologians answer; *Est omnis et sola aqua naturalis, seu elementaris,* "*any and only natural water.*" One of their favourite *dicta* is the saying of Augustine: *Quid est Baptismus? Lavacrum aquæ in verbo: tolle aquam, non est baptismus; tolle verbum, non est baptismus.* Water, therefore is, according to the Romish Church, essential to baptism, and as far as "the matter" is concerned, nothing else is. The water may be marine, or rain, or river, or from a spring, or mineral; it may be clear or turbid, warm or cold, but it must be water. Baptism with mud, wine, milk, oil, saliva, tears, &c., the Romish theologians pronounce invalid.* Their doctrine on this point is identical with our own.

We were therefore greatly surprised to see that it was stated on the floor of the Assembly that Romanists did not baptize with water, but with water mixed with oil. Suppose this to be true, water with oil thrown on it is still water. How many things are mixed with the wine we use at the Lord's supper? Is wine adulterated with water no longer wine? Did not our Saviour call the paschal cup wine, though mixed with water? This objection is trivial. So long as the element used is water, and so long as the significancy of the rite is made to consist in washing with water, the matter of the ordinance is retained. But, as far as we know, the objection is unfounded in fact. There are various ceremonies which precede, attend and follow the rite as administered in the Romish Church; among which is Chrism, or anointing with oil; but these ceremonies are not represented as entering into the nature of the ordinance, or making any part of it.† They are treated of and explained separately. First, Baptism is declared to be a washing with water; and then the ceremonies accompanying this washing

* In answer to the question, what kind of water may be used in Baptism, "*R. Talis est aqua marina, pluvialis, fontana, fluvialis, mineralis; sive turbida sit sive clara, frigida vel calida sive benedicta sive non. . . . E contra invalidus est Baptismus collatus in luto, vino, pinguni cerevisia, lacte, oleo, saliva, sudore, lacrymis,*" &c.— Dens' Theology; tom. v. p. 158.

† The preceding ceremonies are, *exorcismus, signum crucis, salis gustus, et linitio salivæ; Concomitantes, abrenunciatio, unctio baptizandi oleo catechumenorum, catechismus, et inquisitio voluntatis suscipiendi Baptismum; Subsequentes, unctio baptizati per chrisma vestis candidæ donatio, et cerei ardentis traditio.* Dens. vol. v. p. 205.

are stated and explained. In treating of the "matter of baptism," not one word is said of oil or anything else, but water *vera et naturalis* is declared to be necessary and sufficient. As far therefore as the first point is concerned, Romish baptism is baptism. It is a washing with water.

2. Is it then correct as to the form? Is it administered in the name of the Trinity? The form prescribed by the council of Trent, is in these words, "*Ego te baptizo in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.*" The form therefore is identical with our own. It is not in words, merely, that this form is scriptural, the avowed sense in which they are used is correct. There is not a Church on earth which teaches the doctrine of the Trinity more accurately, thoroughly or minutely, according to the orthodoxy of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, than the Church of Rome. The personal and official relations of the adorable Trinity, are also preserved. The Father is represented as the author of the new covenant, the Son as redeemer, the Spirit as sanctifier. There is no such thing as baptism in the name of the Trinity in any Church, if Romish baptism is not.

3. Then as to the third essential part of the ordinance, the design, in this also their baptism agrees with that of Protestants. According to our standards the design of the Sacrament is to signify, seal and apply to believers the benefits of the new covenant. This is the precise doctrine of the Romanists, so far as this. 1. They say it is essential to a sacrament that it should be a sensible sign of spiritual blessings. 2. That it should be instituted by Christ. 3. That it should have a promise of grace.* Hence the sacraments signify, seal, and apply the benefits of redemption. According to both parties, by baptism we are formally constituted members of the visible Church, and partakers of its benefits. The great difference relates not to the design of the ordinance, but to the mode and certainty with which that design is accomplished, and the conditions attached to it. In other words, the difference relates to the efficacy, and not to the design of the ordinance. The design on either side is stated to be to initiate into the visible Church and secure its blessings. But how and to what extent, and under what conditions these blessings are secured by baptism, there is a great difference of opinion. As to the efficacy of the sacraments there are these three general views. First, that of the Zuinglians who make them mere naked signs. Secondly, that of those who teach that they certainly convey to all infants the blessings signified, and to adults if rightly disposed; and third, the middle doctrine maintained by our Church, and the Reformed generally. Speaking of baptism, our Confession of

* Cardinal Tonnere, *Institutiones Theologicæ*, vol. III. p. 276.

Faith says: "By the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited (*i. e.* conveyed) and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the council of God's own will, and in his own appointed time." According to our doctrine then, baptism does not uniformly convey the benefits which it signifies, and secondly its efficacy is not limited to the time of its administration.* With regard to adults, the difference between us and Romanists is much less. According to our standards the sacraments are made effectual as means of grace to believers, or "to worthy receivers;" and Romanists say, that in adults to the profitable use of baptism, there are requisite, the influence of divine grace, the act of faith, of hope, of love, and of penitence or contrition.†

The error of the Romanists concerning the absolute necessity and uniform efficacy (in the case of infants) of baptism, is very great, but it cannot invalidate the nature of the ordinance. It is out of all reason to say that the rite is valid, if it is supposed to be effectual to some and at an indefinite time, and invalid, if supposed to be always effectual when there is no opposition. Besides, if baptism is null and void when administered by those who hold the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, what shall we say to the baptism in the Church of England, in the strict Lutheran Churches, and in all the Churches of the East? On this plan, we shall have to unchurch almost the whole Christian world; and Presbyterians, instead of being the most catholic of Churches, admitting the being of a Church, wherever we see the fruits of the Spirit, would become one of the narrowest and most bigot-

* In the old Scots Confession it is said, "And thus we utterlie damne the vanities of they that affirm Sacramentes to be nothing ellis bot naked and baire signes. No, wee assuredlie beleeve, that be Baptisme we ar ingrafted into Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of his justice, be quhilk our sinnes ar covered and remitted." In the Book of Common Order, "approved by that famous man John Calvin, and received and used by the Reformed Kirk of Scotland," this idea is expressed with some limitation. "The venomous dregs" of sin, it is said, remain in the flesh, "yet by the merites of his death (they) are not imputed to us, because the justice of Jesus Christ is made ours by Baptisme; not that we think any such virtue or power to be included in the visible water, or outward action, for many have been baptized, and yet were never inwardly purged; but our Saviour Christ, who commanded baptism to be administered, will, by the power of the Holie Spirit, effectuallie worke in the hearts of his elect, in time convenient, all that is meant and signified by the same."

† *Quænam (dispositio) requiritur ad fructuosam hujus Sacramenti susceptionem? R. Illam late describit Conc. Trid. sess. 6. c. 6. ut videre est: Summatim dicimus ex eo requiri motum divinæ gratiæ, actum fidei, spei et amoris ac pœnitentiæ seu contritionis.* Dens. vol. v. p. 187.

ed of sects. Indeed we cannot but regard this sudden denunciation of Romish baptism, as a momentary outbreak of the spirit of Popery; a disposition to contract the limits of the Church, and to make that essential to its being and sacraments, which God has never declared to be necessary.

We have now shown that Romish baptism fulfills all the conditions of valid baptism, as given in our standards. It is a washing with water in the name of the Trinity, with the ostensible and professed design of making the recipient a member of the visible Church, and a partaker of its benefits. On what grounds then is it declared to be null and void? The grounds are two. First, it is not administered by ordained ministers of Christ; second, the Church of Rome is not a true Church, and therefore its ordinances are not Christian sacraments. The former of these arguments stands thus: No baptism is valid unless administered by a duly ordained minister of Christ. Romish priests are not such ministers. Therefore Romish baptism is invalid.

It may be proper, before considering this argument, to ascertain the precise point to be proved, or what is meant by the words valid and invalid in this connection. They seem often to be used in the sense of regular and irregular. Christ has appointed a certain class of men to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. For any one not belonging to this class, to perform either service, is irregular, and in that sense invalid. Valid, however, properly means available, (able to effect). A thing is valid when it avails to its appropriate end. Thus a deed is valid which avails to convey a title to property; a marriage is valid, which avails to constitute the conjugal relation. Sometimes the validity of a thing depends upon its regularity; as a deed if not regular, if not made according to law, does not avail for the end for which it was made. Very often, however, the validity of a thing does not depend upon the rules made to regulate the mode of doing it. Many marriages are valid, which violate the rules of decorum, order, and even civil society. When Romish baptism is pronounced invalid, it is not declared simply irregular, in the sense in which lay-preaching is unauthorized; but it is said not to avail to the end for which baptism was instituted; it does not avail to make the recipient a professing Christian. Though a sincere believer should be baptized by a Romanist, such baptism would not signify or seal to him the benefits of the new covenant, nor express his purpose to obey Christ. Such is the declaration. The first argument in support of this position is founded on the assumption that no baptism is valid, in the sense just explained, unless administered by a duly ordained minister of Christ. We do not mean to contest this proposition, and must not be understood as denying it, but we say its truth ought to have been proved and not taken

for granted. Our standards do not affirm it. They say indeed that "neither sacrament may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the word lawfully ordained." Con. of Faith, c. 27, § 4. But they say the same thing of preaching. Larger Cat. ques. 158. Both are irregular; but irregular and invalid are very different things. Again, this proposition is not contained in the definition of baptism. That ordinance is declared to be a washing with water, in the name of the Trinity, to signify our ingrafting into Christ. To say, it is a washing with water, *by a minister duly ordained*, in the name, &c., is to give a new definition, essentially different from the old one. The insertion of this clause may be authorized, but the authority ought to be given. Again, the principle in question, cannot be inferred from the nature and design of baptism. Baptism was instituted to constitute or declare the recipient a disciple of Christ, and to signify and seal to him the benefits of the new covenant. It does not necessarily follow from this statement, that it does not avail to this end, unless administered by an ordained man. If ordination did, as Puseyites say, convey grace and impart supernatural power, it would be more apparent, why baptism by unconsecrated hands should fail to have any effieacy. Puseyites, therefore, are very consistently anabaptists, both here and in England. Again, the principle assumed is contrary to the belief and practice of the great body of the people of God in all ages. The common doctrine of the Church has been, that baptism and teaching belong properly to ministers of the word; in cases of necessity, however, baptism by unordained persons, was regarded as not only valid, but proper; in all other cases, as irregular and censurable, but still as baptism and not to be repeated. At the time of the Reformation this doctrine was retained by the whole Lutheran Church, and by the Church of England. Calvin, Beza, the French Church, and the Church of Holland rejected it, and so we presume did the Church of Scotland. Though, therefore, the Reformed or Calvinistic Churches have generally maintained the position assumed by the Assembly, as to the invalidity of lay-baptism, yet, as it is not asserted in our book, and has been denied by so great a majority of Christians, it ought not to be made the ground of an argument, without some exhibition of the grounds on which it rests. This is a subject to which we presume less attention has been paid in our Church, than it merits. We repeat the remark, that we are not to be understood as denying that baptism must be administered by an ordained man, in order to its validity; we are willing to concede that point in the argument, the conclusion however utterly fails, unless the minor proposition above stated can be proved. Admitting that baptism must be administered by ordained ministers of Christ, it must be proved that Romish priests are not such ministers, before it can be shown that their baptisms are invalid.

Let us inquire then what is an ordained minister, and then see whether the Romish priests come within the definition.

According to the common doctrine of Protestants, an ordained minister is a man appointed to perform the sacred functions of teaching and administering the sacraments in any community professing Christianity. There is a right and a wrong way of doing this; there is a way agreeable to scriptural precedent, and there are many ways which have no such sanction. Still whether it be done by a prelate, a presbytery, by the people, or by the magistrate with the consent of the people, if a man is recognised by a Christian community as a minister, he is to be regarded as having due authority to act as such. It does not follow from this that we are bound to receive him into ministerial communion, or to allow him to act as a minister in our churches. That depends upon his having the qualifications which we deem requisite for the sacred office. Should a prelate or presbytery ordain an ignorant or heretical man, we should be under no obligation to receive him to the sacred office among ourselves. And if the people should elect a man to that office, we are not bound to receive him on the ground of that election, since we believe that ordination by the presbytery ought to be required. Since, however, Christ has not made the ministry essential to the Church, much less any particular method of inducting men into that office, we have no right to say that a body of Christians are no Church, and have no valid sacraments, because they differ from us as to the mode of ordaining ministers. It is one of the Popish principles which have slid into the minds of some Protestants, and which was openly avowed upon the floor of the Assembly, that the ministry is essential to the Church. Such a sentiment is directly opposed to our standards, and to the word of God. According to the Scriptures, a church is a congregation of believers, or of those who profess to be believers; according to the hierarchical system, it is "a congregation of believers *subject to lawful pastors.*" An intrusive element, which is the germ of the whole hierarchical system, is thus introduced into the idea of the Church, which changes and vitiates the whole thing. Bellarmin has the credit of being the first writer who thus corrupted the definition of the Church. The being of a Church does not depend upon the ministry, nor the being of the ministry on the rite of ordination. Any man is a minister in the sense of the proposition under consideration, who is recognised as such by a Christian community.

The soundness of this principle appears, 1. From the consideration already referred to, that we have no authority in this matter to go beyond the Scriptures. If Christ or his apostles had said that no man should be recognised as a minister, nor his official acts accounted valid,

unless ordained in a specified manner, we should be bound by such rule. But the Scriptures contain no such rule, and we have no right to make it. All that the Bible does, is to make known the fact, that ministers were examined and authenticated as teachers by other teachers, but that it must be so, they nowhere assert.

2. This doctrine flows from what is one of the distinguishing principles of the evangelical, as opposed to the hierarchical system, viz.: that all Church power belongs originally to the Church as such. The original commission, the promises and prerogatives were given, not to the Church officers as their *peculium*, but to the people; and they may exercise those prerogatives not regularly, not orderly, or wisely, it may be, but still validly under any form they see fit. They ought, indeed, to follow scriptural examples, as to the mode of making ministers, but still as the power to make them was involved in the original commission granted to the Church, we cannot deny it.

3. To reject the principle in question is to involve ourselves in all the difficulties, absurdities and assumptions of the doctrine of apostolical succession. Every Church would have to prove that its ministry had been regularly ordained in a specific manner from the apostles to the present time. This, from the nature of the case, can no more be done, than a man can prove that all his ancestors were regularly married from the time of Adam. It may be assumed, but it cannot by possibility be proved. And since there is in Scripture no promise of any such unbroken succession of ordinations, to assume it, is gratuitous; and to make such assumption the basis of ecclesiastical claims, or of religious hopes, is absurd and ruinous.

4. We all act upon this principle. What Presbyterian feels called upon to trace up historically to the apostles, the ecclesiastical genealogy of every minister whose act he is called upon to recognize? Or who ever thinks of inquiring whether every candidate for the admission to the Lord's supper, if from among the Methodists or Baptists, was baptized by a man ordained in a particular way? It is always considered enough if the applicant was baptized by one having public authority in the body whence he came, to administer the sacraments.

5. All Protestant Churches have recognised the same principle. The language of the twenty-third Article of the Church of England may be taken as expressing the general sense of the age of the Reformation on this subject. That article says: "Those ought to be judged lawfully called and sent, who are chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them, in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." This asserts the necessity of a call, without prescribing any particular mode as essential to its validity. Accordingly, the validity of the orders which many of

the reformers received in the Romish Church, was universally admitted; while at the same time, no objection was made to the vocation of those who had received nothing more than election by the people. It was held, indeed, that under ordinary circumstances, no one should assume the sacred office to himself, and that besides election by the people, there should, in a regular state of the Church, be an examination and imposition of hands by the presbytery. But it was denied that these things were essential.

Do, then, the Romish priests come within this wide definition of ordained ministers? Are they appointed by public authority to teach the Christian religion, and to administer its ordinances? The question is not whether they are good men, or whether they do not assume sacerdotal and other powers to which they have no claim? or whether they are correct in doctrine? but simply, whether in a body professing to hold saving doctrine, they are appointed and recognized as presbyters? If so, then they are ministers within the sense of the received Protestant definition of the term.* The only ground on which this can be denied is, that they do not in any sense profess the Christian religion any more than Jews or Pagans, and therefore this argument, though presented first and separately in the minute adopted by Assembly, really resolves itself in the second presented in that document, viz: That the Church of Rome is in no sense a Christian Church. Without anticipating that point, however, we maintain that as the Romish priests are appointed and recognized as presbyters in a community professing to believe the Scriptures, the early creeds, and the decisions of the first four general councils, they are ordained ministers in the sense above stated; and consequently baptism administered by them is valid. It has accordingly been received as valid by all Protestant Churches from the Reformation to the present day.

Calvin, in his Institutes, Lib. iv. c. 15 and 16, after saying that baptism does not owe its value to the character of the administrator, adds: "By this consideration, the error of the Donatists is effectually refuted, who made the force and value of the sacrament commensurate with the worth of the minister. Such are our modern Katabaptists, who strenuously deny that we were properly baptized, because we received the rite from impious idolators in the papacy; and they are therefore ferocious for re-baptism. We shall, however, be sufficiently guarded against

* This is the ground on which the Reformed Churches defended the validity of the orders received from the Church of Rome. "*Talis autem est,*" says Turrettin, "*episcoporum et presbyterorum vocatio in ecclesia Romana, quae quoad institutionem Dei bona fuit, sed quoad abusum hominum mala facta est. Unde resecatio errorum et corruptelarum ab hominibus invectarum, non potuit esse vocationis abrogatio, sed correctio et restitutio.*"—Vol. iii. p. 265.

their nonsense, if we remember we were baptized not in the name of any man, but in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and therefore baptism is not of man, but of God, no matter by whom it was administered."

The first canon of the chapter on baptism, in the Book of Discipline of the French Church, declares, "Baptism administered by an unordained person is wholly void and null;" yet the twenty-eighth article of their Confession of Faith declares Romish baptism to be valid. In the National Synod of 1563, John Calvin presented, in the name of the pastors and professors at Geneva, a letter in reply to reasons pronounced by them "very feeble and impertinent," in behalf of lay-baptism, one of which was derived from the assumption that Romish priests were not true ministers, and yet their baptisms are valid. To this the reply made was: "Popish baptism is grounded upon the institution of Christ; because the priests as perverse as they are, and utterly corrupt, are *yet the ordinary ministers of that Church* in which they so tyrannically demean themselves."* To this view the French Church steadily adhered long after the council of Trent, whose decisions were assumed by some of the members of the Assembly, to have wrought such a change in the character of Romanism. The illustration used by Calvin, derived from the fact that those circumcised by apostate priests under the old dispensation, were never recircumcised, or treated as not having received that rite by the inspired prophets, we find repeated by all subsequent writers.

The Church of Holland agreed with the French Church in regarding the Romish priests as authorized to administer baptism.† Such, too, has been the constant doctrine of the Lutheran Church,‡ and of the Church of England. Indeed, we know of no Church that has ever taken different ground. The Assembly, therefore, has taken a position on this subject in opposition to the principles of the whole Protestant

* Quick's Synodicon, vol. i. p. 48.

† Morus, tom. v. p. 449. *Hinc passim judicant Nostri rebaptizandos esse qui ad nos transeunt ante in coetu Socinianorum antitrinitario baptizati. . . . . De baptizatis in ecclesia Romana hodierna mitius judicium Nostri ferre solent, ob retentam illic cum elemento visibili aquæ baptismatis, fidem Trinitatis et administrationem baptismi in Dei triunius nomen.* He quotes the acts of the Synod of Dort, which forbid Romish baptism to be repeated where "the form and substance" of the rite have been retained. Doubts, it seems, were entertained as to baptisms performed by vagrant priests, as a question relating to that point was presented to the French Synod of 1581, who replied: "Since authority to baptize belongs to them according to the order of the Romish Church, baptism administered by them is not to be repeated; but baptism by monks, to whom no such authority belongs, is void."

‡ Gerhard, vol. x. p. 93.

world. A fact which of itself creates a presumption almost overwhelming against their doctrine.

The second great argument in favor of the decision of the Assembly, which indeed includes and supercedes the one just considered, is: The Church of Rome is not a true Church of Christ, and therefore its sacraments are not Christian ordinances. This is a very plausible argument, and has the advantage of being short and syllogistic. To its influence we doubt not is principally to be referred the decision in question. To us, however, it appears to be only another of the innumerable instances of fallacy and false reasoning founded upon the ambiguity of the word Church. We know of no subject in theology on which it is more difficult to attain and preserve distinctness of thought, and precision of language, than this. The word Church has meanings so allied and yet so different, so well authorized and yet so indefinite, that it is almost impossible to avoid using the term in one sense in the premises of an argument, and another in the conclusion. Almost every treatise on the Church which it has been our lot to read, has been more or less a saying and unsaying, affirming and denying the same things of the same subject. This is the fault not so much of the writers as of the vagueness of the terms. You may, with equal truth, affirm or deny that a given body is a Church; you may say that the Church is a congregation of saints, and yet composed, in great part, of sinners; that it is infallible as to matters of faith, and yet may fatally apostatize; that all its members shall be saved, and yet that many of them will be lost. The whole system of Popery and Puseyism owes its logical powers to an adroit management of this word. To the Church are promised in the Scriptures the continued presence of Christ, and influence of his Spirit, by which it is certainly guided into the knowledge of saving truth, preserved from fatal errors, and effectually prepared for heaven. But, according to our standards, the Church consists of the professors of the true religion; therefore, to professors of true religion is promised this continued presence of Christ and the saving guidance of his Spirit. This argument is just as good as that used by the Assembly; and yet, unless it is false, the whole doctrinal system of Romanism is true. It is obvious, therefore, that extreme caution is necessary in constructing any argument, the validity of which depends on the idea attached to the word Church.

The question whether the Church of Rome is a true Church? cannot be intelligently answered without previously fixing the meaning of the term. The word ἐκκλησια in its application to Christians, is in the New Testament a collective term for κλητοι. The called are the Church. Any number of "the called" collectively considered, are a Church. The Church, as such, is not an organization; any more than

the human race, as such, is a society. Men must organize and live in society; but their organizing does not make them men, nor members of the human race. In like manner the Church, or the called, as such, are not an organized body, though it is their duty to organize. But organization does not make them a Church, but being members of the Church, *i. e.* κλητοι, they associate for certain prescribed purposes. It seems to us that a large portion of the false reasoning connected with this whole subject, arises from the erroneous assumption that organization enters into the very idea of the Church. An organized body may be a Church, but it is not their organization that makes them so; because any number of the called, or the whole body of them as a Church, are the Church, in the scriptural sense of the term. When Christ is said to love, Paul to have persecuted, or we labor for the Church, the word does not designate an organized body. It is merely a collective term for the people of God. Since "the called" are, according to the uniform usage of the epistles of the New Testament, the effectually called, or true believers, it follows that the Church is a collective term for true believers. We therefore find that whatever is affirmed of believers is affirmed of the Church, and whatever is promised to believers is promised to the Church. If the Christians of Rome, Corinth, or Ephesus are addressed as the Church in those cities, they are at the same time addressed as believers, as saints, as those who are in Christ, as led by the Spirit, and as heirs of eternal life. As however no man can look upon the heart, we do not know who is a true believer; and therefore we cannot tell who is a member of the Church or body of Christ. We are therefore bound to do as the sacred writers did, that is, to regard and treat every man as a believer who makes a credible profession of faith in Christ; and of course we are bound to regard and treat any body of such men as a Church. If a man makes no profession of faith, we cannot regard him as a believer; nor can we so regard him if he makes any profession inconsistent with the existence of saving faith. And consequently if a body of men make no profession of faith, they cannot be a Church; nor can they be so regarded, if they make a profession which is incompatible with saving faith in Christ. Every man, therefore, who has true faith, is a member of Christ's body, which is the Church; and every man who professes such faith is a visible or professed member of his Church; and any number of such men collectively considered is a branch of the Church. If, therefore, we deny to any man the character of a Christian, on account of the profession which he makes, we must be prepared to show that such faith is incompatible with salvation. For, if possessing such doctrines (or professing nothing more than certain doctrines), he may be saved, he may be a true believer, and of course

a member of the Church. And in like manner, if we deny to any body of men the character of a Church, on account of its creed, we thereby assert that no man holding that creed can be saved. To determine, therefore, whether a man or a Church is to be denied the Christian character, we must ascertain what is the minimum of truth that can save the soul. For to deny that a man is a Christian on account of his ignorance or errors, and yet admit he may be saved, is to contradict ourselves. And to say that a body of such men is no Church, is no less a contradiction. It is therefore evident that the question, What is a true Church? resolves itself into this: How little truth may avail to salvation? This is a question we are hardly competent to answer, and there is no need of answering it. We can tell what is a pure Church; and with that standard we can compare our own and all others, and regulate our intercourse with them accordingly. The course, however, commonly pursued is to give a definition of a pure Church, and then to declare any community not embraced in that definition, to be no Church. Thus it is said, a Church is a congregation of believers in which the pure word of God is preached; the pure word of God is not preached in Rome, therefore Rome is not a Church. By the same argument the whole world may be unchurched, save our own particular sect, no matter how narrow that sect may be. This method of reasoning is just as unreasonable as it would be to say, a Christian is one who believes the doctrines and obeys the precepts of Christ, therefore no man who is erroneous in doctrine or practice can be a Christian; which would be to go beyond even Perfectionists, for they do not make a perfect faith essential to the character of a Christian. We cannot take a definition of a perfect Christian as the rule of decision whether any particular man is to be treated as a brother; nor can we take the definition of a pure Church as the criterion of the being of a Church. Any man who professes truth enough to save his soul, is not to be denounced as no Christian, simply for his faith's sake. And any body of men that professes truth enough to save men, cannot on the ground of heresy be denied the character of a Church.

The correctness of this exposition of what is necessary to the being of a Church, is plain, 1. From the express declarations of scripture. The Bible teaches that whosoever is a true worshipper of Christ, no matter how ignorant or how erroneous he may be, is a true Christian. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, is born of God." Such is the explicit declaration of the Bible. Whoever, therefore, professes to be a worshipper of Christ, *i. e.*, to love, reverence and serve him as God, does thereby profess to be a Christian; and any body consisting of those who profess to worship Christ, is a body of professed Christians, that is, a Church. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians,

addresses himself to the Church of God in that city, *i. e.*, to those "who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Any body of men, therefore, that retains the doctrine of the incarnation, or that Jesus is the Son of God, that sets him forth as the object of religious worship and confidence, retains the vital principle of Christianity. Nothing can prevent the saving power of that truth, when it is really embraced. 2. Again, according to our standards, there is no salvation out of the visible Church. It is a common saying of Protestant theologians, "No man has God for his father, who has not the Church for his mother." This is only saying, with the Scriptures, that there is no salvation out of Christ. But if these premises are correct, the conclusion necessarily follows, that any religious body in communion with which men may be saved, is a part of the visible Church; otherwise men are saved out of that Church. The visible Church, therefore, according to our standards, consists of all those who profess saving truth. 3. This point is so plain, that it was repeatedly conceded on the floor of the Assembly. The question, whether the Romish Church is a true Church, was admitted to turn on the previous question: Does she retain truth enough to save the soul? One of the speakers did, indeed, say that although there were true believers in the Church of Rome, they were not members of the visible Church; which is a contradiction in terms, since the visible Church consists of *all* who profess the true religion, or saving doctrine. The mere fact of their having faith, and avowing it in their conversation and deportment, makes them members of the visible Church, in the true, scriptural, and Presbyterian, though not in the Puseyite, sense of the term.

If these principles are correct, we have only to apply them to the case in hand, and ask, Does the Church of Rome retain truth enough to save the soul? We do not understand how it is possible for any Christian man to answer this question in the negative. They retain the doctrine of the Incarnation, which we know from the infallible word of God, is a life-giving doctrine. They retain the whole doctrine of the Trinity. They teach the doctrine of atonement far more fully and accurately than multitudes of professedly orthodox Protestants. They hold a much higher doctrine, as to the necessity of divine influence, than prevails among many whom we recognize as Christians. They believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and in eternal life and judgment. These doctrines are in their creeds, and however they may be perverted and overlaid, still as general propositions they are affirmed. And it must be remembered, that it is truth presented in general propositions, and not with subtle distinctions, that saves the soul. Protestants, says Bossuet, cannot deny that we admit the fundamentals of religion. "If they will have them to consist in

believing that we must adore one only God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that we must put our trust in God alone through his Son, who became man, was crucified, and rose again for us, they know in their conscience that we profess this doctrine; and if they add those other doctrines which are contained in the Apostles' Creed, they do not doubt that we receive them all without exception." Having quoted an admission to this effect from Daille, he adds: "But though M. Daille had not granted thus much, the thing is manifest in itself; and all the world knows that we profess all those doctrines which Protestants call fundamental." *

It is further evident that the Church of Rome retains truth enough to save the soul, from the fact that true believers, who have no other means of instruction than those therein afforded, are to be found in that communion. Wherever the fruits of the Spirit are, there is the Spirit; and wherever the Spirit is, there is still the Church. It is one

* An Exposition of the Doctrines of the Catholic Church, by the Right Rev. J. B. Bossuet, London, 1685, p. 2. On Justification, Bossuet says: "We believe, in the first place, that our sins are freely forgiven us by the divine mercy, for Christ's sake. These are the express words of the council of Trent. . . . Seeing the Scriptures explain the remission of sins, by sometimes telling us that God covers them, and sometimes that he takes them away and blots them out by the grace of his Holy Spirit, which makes us new creatures; we believe that to form a perfect idea of the justification of a sinner, we must join together both of these expressions. For which reason we believe our sins not only to be covered, but also entirely washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ, and by the grace of regeneration; which is so far from obscuring or lessening that idea which we ought to have of the merit of his blood, on the contrary it heightens and augments it. So that the righteousness of Christ is not only imputed but actually communicated to the faithful, by the operation of his Holy Spirit, insomuch that they are not only reputed, but rendered just by his grace." p. 12. It is easy to see here the unhappy blending of justification and sanctification together; but it is a far better statement of the truth than is to be found in multitudes of Arminian writers; and unspeakably better than that, which for a hundred years, was preached from the great majority of the pulpits in the Church of England.

Romanists teach that Christ is the meritorious ground of our justification. Thus the council of Trent, sess. vi. c. 7, says: *Meritoria (causa) est dilectissimus Dei unigenitus, qui cum essemus inimici, per nimiam caritatem, qua dilexit nos, sua sanctissima passione in ligno crucis, nobis justificationem meruit.* And in c. 8, the council say: "*Christum sanctissima sua passione in ligno crucis nobis justificationem meruisse, et pro nobis Deo Patri satisfecisse, et neminem posse esse justum, nisi cui merita passionis Domini nostri Jesu Christi communicantur.*" In like manner, Bellarmin, *de Justificatione*, ii. c. 2, says: "We are justified on account of the merits of Christ;" and in c. 7, he says, "If Protestants only mean that the merits of Christ are imputed to us, because they are given to us by God, so that we can present them to the Father for our sins since Christ undertook to make satisfaction for us, and to reconcile us to God the Father, they are right." Which is precisely what we do mean.

of the worst features of Puseyism, that it takes such a view of the Church, as to force its advocates to deny those to be Christians who exhibit the Spirit of Christ. Instead, therefore, of loving them as brethren, they cast out their names as evil; which is not only a great sin, but a great detriment to their own souls. We shall not less sin against God and our own best interests, if we reject as reprobates any of the real followers of Christ, no matter in what external communion they may be found. We rejoice, therefore, that the Assembly freely admits, in their Minute, that there are true believers in the Church of Rome. Indeed, we are not sure that truth would not demand the admission that there were more of evangelical doctrine and of true religion in that Church, than were to be found in the Church of England, or in some of the Protestant Churches of the continent of Europe, notwithstanding their orthodox creeds, during their long declension in the last century. We have heretofore had the misfortune to be held up as the friends of drunkenness, and the advocates of slavery, because we could not believe that alcohol is sin, and every slaveholder a thief; and we fear that even good men may now regard us as the apologists of Popery, because we cannot think that a community who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who worship the Trinity, who hold that we are justified by the merits of Christ, and are sanctified by his Holy Spirit, are to be placed in the same category with Pagans and Mohammedans. And we are constrained to say, that as the cause of temperance and the interests of the slave, suffer greatly from the extravagance of their advocates, so we fear the cause of Protestantism suffers materially from the undiscriminating denunciations heaped upon the Church of Rome, and from transferring the abhorrence due to her corruptions, to her whole complicated system of truth and error.

The view presented above of the Church of Rome is sustained by the authority of the Reformers, and of all Protestant Churches. We have already remarked, that the question whether the Church of Rome is a true Church, may be affirmed or denied, according to the sense attached to the terms. Accordingly, it is both affirmed and denied, by the parties referred to. They use the strongest terms of denunciation of the whole papal system; its perversion of the truth, its false doctrines, its corruption in worship and morals; its tyranny and persecuting spirit. They declared that Church to be antichristian and apostate, the mystical Babylon, from which the people of God are commanded to withdraw. All this is said not only by the Reformers, but by Churches and theologians down to the present day. At the same time, and in the same breath, they said that viewed in a different light, the Church of Rome is still a Church, just as the apostate Israelites were still the covenant people of God. If the Israelites were denominated from the

character of their rulers, or of the mass of the people, from their authoritative declarations and acts, they were apostates and idolaters. If denominated from the relation which they still sustained to God, from the truth which they continued to profess, or from the real saints who were to be found among them, they were still the Church, and were so addressed by the prophets, and their circumcision regarded as the seal of God's covenant. Thus Calvin says: "If the Church be considered as the body whose judgment we are bound to revere, to whose authority we must defer, whose instructions we must receive, to whose discipline we must submit, whose communion we must religiously and in all things cultivate, we cannot concede the papacy to be the Church, as though the obligation to obedience still continued. Yet we willingly concede to it what the prophets conceded to the Jews and Israelites. . . . Since then we are not willing to concede the title Church unconditionally to the papists, we do not thereby deny that there are churches among them, but only contend for the true and legitimate constitution of the Church, with which communion is required in sacraments and doctrine." Lib. iv. c. 2. §§ 10–12. To the same effect Turrettin denies that the modern Church of Rome can, without qualification, be called a true Church of Christ; but to explain his position he says: "The Church of Rome may be viewed under a two-fold aspect, as Christian in reference to the profession of Christianity, and of the evangelical truths which it retains; and as it is papal, in reference to its subjection to the Pope, and to its corruptions, as well in manners as in doctrine, which it has mixed up with those truths and built upon them, contrary to the word of God. In the former aspect, we do not deny that there is some truth in that Church; but in the latter, under which she is contemplated when we deny her to be a true Church, we deny that she is Christian and apostolical, but affirm her to be antichristian and apostate. In this view, *impropriè et secundum quid*, we admit the Church of Rome to be a Christian Church in three respects. 1. In respect to the people of God, the elect, still remaining in it, who are commanded to come out. 2. In respect to the external form, in which we discover some of the elements of a Church, in respect as well to the word of God and its preaching, which though corrupted, still remain, and as to the administration of the sacraments, especially baptism, which, as to the substance, still remains entire. 3. As to Christian and evangelical doctrines, as concerning the Trinity, Christ as mediator, his incarnation, death and resurrection, and others by which she is distinguished from pagans and infidels."—vol. iii. p. 135.

We admit that it is a very unfortunate method of speaking, to say a body is a Church *secundum quid*, and *secundum quid* is not a Church.

Still this is an inconvenience we have to submit to on almost all subjects, and in the present instance, it expresses a great truth. It must be remembered that these were holy men, who trembled at the word of God. Christ had commanded his disciples to hear the Church, to remain in her communion and to submit to her discipline. To admit, therefore, without qualification, that the Church of Rome was a true Church, seemed to include an admission of an obligation to receive her doctrines and submit to her authority. This they could not do. They therefore denied that the Church of Rome was a Church in any such sense as to require communion and obedience. They thereby intended to deny that the supremacy of the Pope, the hierarchy, transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, worshipping of saints, and the other numerous corruptions of popery, belong to the Church of God; that they are Christian or apostolical, and as such to be received and submitted to. While they admitted that the reception of the Scriptures as the word of God, the profession of saving doctrines, the sacraments, the presence of the elect, are characteristics of the Church, and consequently that any body of which these things can be affirmed, cannot consistently with the truth of God, be simply and without qualification, declared to be no more a Church than a company of pagans. The necessity of making these distinctions, of affirming and denying the same proposition, shows the impropriety of the question. Instead of asking, What is a Church? we should ask, What is a pure Church? All the definitions given in our books, tell us what a pure Church is. And when Protestants deny the Church of Rome to be a Church, they deny that she comes within their definition of a pure Church, though they admit her to be a corrupt and apostate Church. The whole foundation, therefore, of the argument of the Assembly, seems to us to be false. It assumes that the Church of Rome is in no sense a Church; which is to assume that she does not admit the Scriptures to be the word of God, that she does not profess that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, that she does not profess saving truths, and that she does not bring forth children unto God; all which assumptions are notoriously and confessedly false, and therefore the conclusion which is derived from these assumptions, must be unsound.

Long as this article has become, there is one other view of this subject we must be permitted to present. It matters not whether the Papacy as an organization is a Church or no, as far as the present question is concerned. The contrary assumption is founded upon the idea that baptism is an act of a Church; or that the administrator so acts in the name of the organized society to which he belongs, that those whom he baptizes thereby become members of that society. It was hence argued that the recipients of Romish baptism, are made Romanists,

and are baptized into a profession of all the heresies of popery. This appears to us an entirely wrong view of the subject, and to be founded on the Puseyite doctrine of the Church as a corporation, or organized body, into which men are admitted by the ordinance of baptism. It is however the admitted doctrine of Protestants, that the Church Catholic is not an organized society. It is also admitted among Protestants that baptism does not initiate the recipient into any particular Church, but into the Church catholic. The eunuch when baptized by the road side, Paul when baptized in his chamber, the jailor at Philippi, and the thousands of scattered believers baptized by the apostles were not made members of any particular Church, or organized body, by their baptism. After they were baptized, and thus introduced into the Church catholic, they associated or organized themselves into particular Churches. So at the present day, no man is made an Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Methodist by his baptism, but after baptism, he joins what particular denomination he sees fit. No man therefore is made a papist by being baptized by a papist. It follows from this that the validity of baptism does not depend upon the character of the particular denomination to which the administrator belongs; because he does not act in the name of that denomination, but as a member of the Church catholic. And every man who professes saving truth is a member of that Church. It matters not, therefore, whether the Quakers as a society come within the definition of a Church; individual Quakers, if they have the faith of God's elect and profess it, are members of his Church. And so, too, it matters not whether the Papacy comes within the definition of a church; individual papists, if they profess that Jesus is the Son of God, are within the pale of the Church catholic, and, if they have public authority, may baptize in the name of Christ.

Baptism, therefore, not being an ordinance of any particular Church, but of the Church catholic, and every man who professes saving truth being a member of that Church, Romish baptism, if administered by a man professing such truth, is Christian baptism. It is baptism administered by a member of the visible Church, having public authority in that Church, which is all that can be said of baptism administered by the Archbishop of Canterbury, or by the moderator of our Assembly.

We maintain, therefore, Romish baptism to be valid; that is, that it avails to make the recipient a member of the Church catholic, because it is a washing with water, in the name of the Trinity, with the design to signify, seal and apply the benefits of the covenant of grace. It is administered by ordained ministers; for a Romish priest is a man publicly called to the office of a presbyter. It is administered by a member of the visible Church; for every man who confesses that Jesus is

the Son of God, is a member of that Church. It is only by adopting the hierarchical or Puseyite doctrine of the Church, and of orders, that the opposite conclusion can be sustained. We must restrict the Church to miserably narrow limits, within which the truth and Spirit of God refuse to be confined; and we must claim an authority and virtue for specific forms of ordination, which the Scriptures nowhere sanction. We are, therefore, constrained to regard the decision of the Assembly as in direct conflict with our standards, and with the word of God; and as incompatible with Protestant principles, as well as with the practice of the whole Protestant world. We have no scruple in saying this. For in protesting against the decision of one hundred and sixty-nine members of the Assembly, we can hide ourselves in the crowd of 169,000,000 of faithful men who, since the Reformation, have maintained the opposite and more catholic doctrine.*

If the Church of Rome is antichrist, a synagogue of Satan, how can its ordinances be Christian sacraments? This, we doubt not, is the difficulty which weighs most with those who reject Romish baptisms as invalid. We would ask such persons whether they admit that a Roman Catholic can be a child of God? If he can, how can a man be a member of the synagogue of Satan and of the body of Christ in the same time? Is there no inconsistency here? If not, then there is no inconsistency in declaring that the Romish system, so far as it is distinguished from that of evangelical Churches, is antichristian, and

* We have heard it repeatedly objected that this whole discussion attributes too much importance to baptism. What is the harm, it is asked, of declaring a particular kind of baptism to be invalid? or of repeating the ordinance? We have also heard brethren say, they left the matter to the decision of the applicant for admission to our communion. If he wished to be rebaptized, they rebaptized him; if he was satisfied with the baptism received in the Church of Rome, they did not insist on a repetition of the ordinance. We have no superstitious feeling on this subject, but we object to such repetition. 1. Because it involves a declaration of what is not true. It declares that to be no baptism which has all the essential characteristics of that sacrament. It declares that the recipient had never before avowed himself a Christian, when the fact is not so. 2. Because we have neither scriptural authority nor example for the repetition of the rite; and such repetition is forbidden by our Confession of Faith, and is contrary to the usage of the whole Christian Church. 3. Because it is contrary to the very nature of the ordinance. *Baptismus est signum initiationis.* It is a declaration that the recipient now for the first time takes upon him the obligations, and claims the privileges of a professing Christian. If a man is installed into a particular office, it is a declaration that he was not before publicly invested with the office. If he presents himself to be married to a particular woman, it is a declaration that she is not already his wife. And if he presents himself for baptism, he declares that he has not been washed with water in the name of the Trinity, in order to his initiation into the visible Church.

yet that those who are groaning under that system are in the visible Church. The terms antichrist, synagogue of Satan, &c., refer not to the mass of the people, nor to the presbyters of that communion, nor the word of God, nor the saving truths which they profess, but to the Popish hierarchy and its corruptions. That hierarchy, with its usurpations and errors, is the mystery of iniquity, the man of sin, which in the Church catholic, the temple of God, exalts itself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. If Roman Catholics are no part of the visible Church, then the Romish hierarchy is not "the man of sin" spoken of by the apostle, for he was to rise and rule in the Church. It is, therefore, one thing to denounce the Romish system, and another to say that Romanists are no part of the Church catholic. And if they are in the Church, their baptism being a washing with water in the name of the Trinity, is Christian baptism; just as the word of God, when read or preached by them, is still his word, and is to be received and obeyed as such.

§ 3. Infant Members Subjects of Discipline. [*]

[*Dir. for Wor.* chap. ix. sec. 1.—Comp. *Digests* of 1873, pp. 671, 672.]

We fully agree with Dr. Thornwell in all he said about our ecclesiastical courts and other points in the new Book of Discipline, which had been the subjects of criticism, except the relation of baptized persons to the Church. As to this point, there were three views presented in the Committee of Revision. First, that which favoured the form in which the subject is exhibited in the old Book. It is there said: "All baptized persons are members of the Church, are under its care, and subject to its government and discipline; and when they have arrived at the years of discretion, they are bound to perform all the duties of Church members." This undoubtedly expresses the general conviction of the Christian world. It has been embodied in the principles, and carried out in the practice of all historical Churches from the beginning, until the rise of the Independents. It undoubtedly expresses the faith and practice of our own Church, from its organization until the present time. Some of the Committee were very strenuous that it should be allowed to retain its place in the Revised Book, without alteration. A second view, while admitting that baptized persons were in some sense members of the Church, seemed to regard them as only under its fostering care, but not subject to its government or discipline. Third, as a compromise, it was proposed to say, as in the Revised Book,

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*;" remarks on Dr. Thornwell's speech in support of the Revised Book of Discipline; *Princeton Review*, 1859, p. 603.]

that while all baptized persons are members of the Church, and under its care and *government*, yet the proper subjects of *judicial process* are those who have professed their faith in Christ.* In this form it was passed, but not unanimously—Dr. McGill not being willing to give up the clear statement of the old Book. In the new form, a distinction is made between *government* and *judicial* process; that is, between discipline in its wide and its narrow sense. And as the paragraph, in its revised form, asserts that baptized persons are subject to the government of the Church, it was thought that the great principle involved remained intact. We are free to confess that the old form is, in our view, greatly to be preferred; and we are not surprised at the opposition which the change has elicited, although we voted for it, as a compromise. Dr. Thornwell's argument assumes that the indispensable condition under which a man becomes the subject of discipline, is his own personal and voluntary profession of faith in Christ. This is perfectly intelligible and inevitable, if a personal and voluntary confession of faith is the indispensable condition of Church membership. If it is not, the principle is out of its place. It does not belong to the theory of infant Church membership. One syllogism is, Members of the Church are the proper subjects of discipline: All baptized persons are members of the Church: Therefore, all baptized persons are the proper subjects of discipline. This is the old and common doctrine. The Independent frames his argument thus: Members of the Church are the proper subjects of discipline: Only those who voluntarily profess their faith in Christ are members of the Church: Therefore, only those who thus profess their faith are the proper subjects of discipline. Dr. Thornwell adopts neither of these syllogisms. He objects to the major proposition in the former of the two. He denies that all members of the Church are the proper subjects of discipline. He distinguishes between professing and non-professing members, and makes voluntary profession indispensable to that relation to the Church, which is the foundation of discipline. But this is contrary to all analogy. A Hebrew child was a member of the Theocracy by birth, and subject to all its laws, independently of all profession. So every Englishman or American is a member of the state, and subject to its laws, without any personal and voluntary profession of allegiance. We see not how

* It is not to be expected that all the members of a large committee who may agree to its report are of the same mind as to all the principles which the report may contain. It is the report of the committee, because the act of the majority, and the minority agree to it as a whole, while they reserve their right to their own judgment as to its details. There is no breach of confidence, therefore, in any member of such committee, avowing his preference for some other form of expression than that which the majority of his brethren decided to adopt.

this principle can be denied, in its application to the Church, without giving up our whole doctrine, and abandoning the ground to the Independents and Anabaptists. If, as we all hold, the children of believing parents are, by the ordinance of God, to be regarded and treated as members of the Church, this of necessity involves their right to its privileges and their subjection to its laws. Dr. Thornwell objects that, according to this principle, all baptized persons must be admitted to the Lord's table, and that we should have our Churches filled with hypocrites. This, however, is a *non-sequitur*. A person being a citizen of England, or America, subject to the laws of the state, does not give him the right of suffrage. That right is limited by the laws of the state. In England, and in some of the states of this Union, it depends on the possession of a given amount of property; in other states, on the attainment of the age of twenty-one; as to females, they never acquire the privilege. In every case the right is limited by what the state deems the possession of the requisite qualifications. So in the Church, admission to the Lord's table, or to Church offices, is limited by the possession of the qualifications which the word of God prescribes. It by no means therefore follows, that because baptized persons are subject to discipline, they are entitled to admission to the Lord's Supper.

The Doctor further objects, that as the object of discipline is not the vindication of justice, but to produce repentance, it is utterly absurd in regard to "a man who has never heard the voice of the Lord in his soul." This is surely a strange idea. Cannot the means of repentance be used in reference to the unconverted? Dr. Thornwell himself says, that baptized persons who do not act in accordance with their obligations, should be "followed with exhortation, remonstrance, and prayers." But are not exhortation and remonstrance means of repentance? Do they not as much suppose a recognition of the claims of God as the subjection to discipline? They are indeed forms of discipline; and we cannot help thinking that it is a contradiction in terms, to say that a man is a member of the Church and not subject to its discipline. Whether he shall be subject to that particular form of discipline implied in "judicial process," might be a question. But as his amenability to such process is denied on grounds which, as it seems to us, involve the denial of his true relation to the Church, we are decidedly in favour of the paragraph as it stands in our present Book.

§ 4. Terms of Communion.

a. The Lord's Table for the Lord's People. [*]

[*Directory for Worship*, chap. viii., sec. iv. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 669, 44, 307, 487, 495.]

Several of the answers proposed by the Committee of Bills and Overtures to the questions submitted to them, contain important principles. Of these answers the following are of the most consequence:

1. An inquiry on the lawfulness of admitting to the Lord's Supper persons not holding the doctrines, or submitting to the discipline of the Presbyterian Church. The Committee reported a resolution, stating in substance, that as to the knowledge and deportment of persons applying, the session must judge, save in the case of persons invited to sit from other churches. After some inquiries and explanations the report was adopted.

The principles of Church communion are so clearly laid down in Scripture, and so distinctly stated in our Standards, that whenever we see such inquiries as the above presented, we take it for granted they come from Congregationalists, who think, in many cases, each particular parish Church may establish its own terms of communion, or from some other source, foreign to our own Church. Knowledge to discern the Lord's body, faith to feed upon him, repentance, love, and new obedience, are the only conditions of Christian communion which any Church on earth has a right to impose. The Lord's table is for the Lord's people—and we commit a great sin, if we presume to debar any man, giving credible evidence of being a child of God, from our Christian fellowship. All imposition of other terms, whether relating to unessential doctrines, to slavery, temperance, hymnology, or anything else, is setting up ourselves above God in his own house; and that is the vital germ of antichrist.

b. Credible Evidence of Conversion alone required. [†]

[*Directory for Worship*, chap. ix., sec. iii.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 306, 475, 495, 674-677.]

The ecclesiastical principles of this discourse ["a Discourse delivered in Dec. 1839, by J. C. Coit," of Cheraw, S. C.] we regard as in direct conflict with the standards of the Presbyterian Church. It is the leading doctrine of this sermon that no man is to be regarded and treated as a Christian who does not adopt the standards of the Presbyterian Church,

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1853, p. 452.]

[† From article reviewing Discourse named in text; *Princeton Review*, 1840, p. 589.]

or some formula of doctrine of like import. The exclusive principle of Christianity, the writer teaches, is faith in the doctrine of Christ according to our standards; all who do not adopt that doctrine as thus set forth, we are bound to denounce, and to have no communion with them as Christians. He censures the Church for having "intermingled in religious correspondence with Arminians, Methodists, and Pelagians." He sneers repeatedly at the expression "Sister Churches." He exclaims, "We turn the New School Presbyterians out of our house, because we say they deny our faith, our gospel; and avowed Arminians are invited into it, welcomed and embraced as Christian brethren." This idea pervades the whole discourse, and unless we are prepared to maintain this exclusive principle, all talk of reform, he calls, mere vapouring.

Now we confidently affirm, that this is not the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church, but, on the contrary, is in direct opposition to her spirit and principles. The first proof of the correctness of this declaration, though negative, is conclusive. The fact that our Church no where enjoins the adoption of the Confession of Faith as a term of Christian communion, is proof positive that she does not consider it necessary. She wisely demands the adoption of that Confession of all who are admitted to the office of bishop, or ruling elder, or deacon, but she has never required it of the private members of the Church. Many of our New School brethren went to the extreme of asserting that our Church required of her ministers nothing but what was essential to the Christian character; and now it seems that some are for going to the opposite extreme, and teach that the Confession of Faith is the test not only of ministerial, but of Christian communion. These extremes are equally dangerous and equally opposed to our standards.

It is not, however, by merely abstaining from requiring the adoption of the Confession of Faith by private members, that our Church teaches that such adoption is not necessary to Christian communion, but by expressly teaching the contrary doctrine. Our standards from beginning to end teach that we are bound to regard and treat as Christians, and to receive to our communion as such, all who give credible evidence of being true Christians; and she no where prescribes, as part of that evidence, the adoption of the whole system of doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith. "The Catholic Church," our Confession teaches, "hath been sometimes more, and sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of

Satan." * In describing those who ought not to be admitted to Christian communion, the Confession says: "All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table." † It is here plainly taught that those who are fit for communion with the Lord should be admitted to his table. And what a monstrous doctrine is the opposite assumption! Who are we, that we should refuse communion with those with whom Christ and the Holy Ghost commune? We devoutly thank God that no such anti-Christian doctrine is countenanced by our Church. In the Larger Catechism, in answer to the question,[‡] May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation, come to the Lord's supper? it is said, "One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not assured thereof, and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity, in which case (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed for the relief of even weak and doubting Christians) he is to bewail his unbelief, and labour to have his doubts resolved; and so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's supper, that he may be further strengthened." And in the immediately-following answer we are taught that it is only "the ignorant and scandalous" whom we are authorized to debar from communion. The qualifications for the Lord's supper, as laid down in the Shorter Catechism, are knowledge to discern the Lord's body, faith to feed upon him, repentance, love, and new obedience. In the Directory, chapter 8, we are told that "the ignorant and scandalous are not to be admitted to the Lord's supper." And in the following chapter, in reference to the young, it is said, "'When they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed, it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's supper." And on the same page it is said, "Those who are to be admitted to sealing ordinances, shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety."

Nothing, therefore, can be plainer than that our Church requires nothing more than credible evidence of Christian character as the condition of Christian communion. Of that evidence the Church officers are to judge. Not one word is said of the adoption of the Confession of Faith, or of any thing but the evidences of piety. Any man, therefore, who gives evidence of being a Christian, we are bound by

* Confession, ch. 25. § 4, 5. † Con. 29. 8.
[‡ Ques. 147.]

the rules of our Church to admit to our communion. And so far from there being the slightest intimation that the adoption of the whole system of our doctrine contained in our standards is necessary to a man's being a Christian, there is the strongest evidence to the contrary. This evidence is to be found in the omission of any mention of the standards in those passages which speak of the communion of saints; in the mention of other terms than those of subscription to a formula of doctrine, and in the admission that true Churches may be impure both as to doctrine and practice, that is, may reject what we hold to be truth without forfeiting their Christian character.

The doctrine here contended for has been repeatedly recognized by the General Assembly. So recently as May, 1839, in their letter to the churches, the Assembly said: "We have ever admitted to our communion all those who, in the judgment of charity, were sincere disciples of Jesus Christ." They add, however, that "this has no reference to the admission of men to offices in the house of God." With regard to all office-bearers, they say: "The founders of our Church, and all who have entered it with enlightened views and honest intentions, have declared to the world and to all other Christian Churches that the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, is that sound doctrine, which we are to require of all those who seek the office of a bishop." "Such are the principles," add the General Assembly, "on which our Church was founded, and on which, for more than a century, it was faithfully administered. It is believed that during all this period no one was ever debarred from the communion of saints, who was regarded as a sincere disciple of Christ, and that no one was admitted to any office in the Church, or, if admitted, was allowed to retain his standing, who dissented in any material point from the system of doctrine contained in our standards." [*]

There is one monstrous assertion relating to this subject involved in one of the passages quoted above from Mr. Coit's sermon, which we cannot pass unnoticed. He virtually asserts that the New School party were cut off as unfit for Christian communion. This assertion is in the very face of the solemn declaration of the Assembly, that they had no intention of affecting either the ministerial standing, or the Church relations of any one in the four synods. They declared that it is because of their irregular organization, that the act of dissolution was passed, and that any who chose might organize themselves agreeably to the constitution, and thus their connection with the Church be preserved. This is the very view of the case which Mr. Coit gives, in the

[* See *par. b* of Pastoral Letter in *Digest* of 1873, p. 306.]

body of his sermon, of the acts of the Assembly of 1837. "As to the clamour," he says, "which has been made about 'cutting off five hundred ministers and sixty thousand communicants' by the Assembly's edict of 1837, the truth is, not one person was cut off, unless he exscinded himself upon the voluntary principle as every one will see who can read and will look at the enactment. The effect of the act was to abolish an anomalous ecclesiastical connection of four synods with the General Assembly; a connection which had grown up out of a temporary missionary arrangement, (made when the country covered by these synods was mostly a wilderness,) operating most perniciously upon the 'truth, peace, and purity of the churches,' and all the reasons for which had long ceased to exist." This representation is undoubtedly correct. The acts of 1837 deposed no minister and excommunicated no Church member. They declared no man and no set of men unworthy of Christian communion. It would indeed have been a monstrous iniquity for the Assembly to excommunicate thousands of Christians of whom they knew nothing, and who had been neither accused nor convicted of any offence. The imputation of any such purpose to the General Assembly is a gross calumny against that venerable body.

The doctrine so plainly taught in our standards, that Christian fellowship should be extended to all who exhibit the Christian character, is no less plainly taught in the word of God. We are there commanded to receive all those whom God has received. In the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it is in various forms enjoined on Christians not to reject any who live on Christian principles. True religion consists in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he who in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men." And surely those who are acceptable to God may well be acceptable to his Church.

There is no duty more frequently or pointedly enjoined in the New Testament, than love of the brethren. It is made the badge of discipleship. "Hereby" says Christ "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. This duty involves of course the recognition as brethren of all those who are really such, and the exercise of cordial affection and confidence towards them. It matters not by what name they may be called, whether they follow with us or not; if they bear the image of Christ, those who fail to recognize and honor it, fail to love the brethren; they reject and despise those whom Christ has received, and have reason to consider seriously lest Christ should say unto them, In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me.

It would avail as little in such a case to say, We did not regard him as a brother; for this is the very heart of the offence. If a man is a brother and gives the scriptural evidence of the fact, not to see and recognize that evidence is an indication of that very state of mind which is so offensive to our Divine Master. Will it avail us in that day, to say, We did not think any man could be a Christian who sang Watts' Psalms, or who did not wear plain clothes, or who refused to give a pledge of total abstinence, or who declined to join an abolition society, or who denied the authority of the Pope or of prelates, or who did not adopt the same standards of doctrine as we did? The question will be, Did you refuse to recognize those as Christians who were really such, and who gave scriptural evidence of their being the disciples of Christ? What that evidence is, is recorded in the word of God, and every man and every Church must apply it upon their own responsibility. One thing, however, is plain, viz.: that we are bound to receive all those whom God has received; and are forbidden to require more for communion with us, than he requires for communion with him.

There is a prevalent misconception on this subject, which ought to be corrected. It is said that by communing with any Church we recognize or sanction their errors. This is not so. We recognize them as Christians, and nothing more. If a Presbyterian commune in a Congregational or Episcopal church, no man regards him as sanctioning their distinctive views of Church government. It is simply in their character of fellow Christians that he sits with them at the table of the Lord, to which they have a common right. And great is the guilt of those who refuse that right to any to whom it properly belongs.

Our standards tell us that particular Churches "may err in making the terms of communion too lax or too narrow." No one, it is presumed, can accuse our Church of going to either extreme, in requiring, as the condition of Christian communion, nothing more and nothing less than Christian character. And no individual congregation or presbytery in our connection has a right to alter those terms. In applying the rule the responsibility rests upon the officers of each particular church, and no doubt errors in this matter are often committed. The Bible contains a perfect rule of faith and practice; and we are bound to believe all the Bible teaches, and to do all that it commands. But perfect faith is no more necessary to true discipleship, than perfect conduct. There are some things which, if a man does, would afford decisive evidence that he is not a Christian; and there are some truths the rejection of which affords no less decisive evidence of the same fact. But as there are infirmities of temper and behaviour, so are there errors in doctrine, which are consistent with true religion, and we have no more right to exact a strict conformity to our own belief of the true

import of the rule of faith, than we have to demand perfect conformity to the rule of duty. "Those who are to be admitted to sealing ordinances," says our Directory, "shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety." Beyond this no Church session has a right to go.

We have ever regarded the erroneous views and practice of the Churches in relation to Christian communion as one of the greatest evils of the Christian world. It is not the existence of sects, for that perhaps is unavoidable, but it is the refusal to recognise as brethren those who really love and serve Christ, that is to be condemned and deplored, It is this that has turned the ancient eulogium: See how these Christians love one another, into the condemning testimony: See how these Christians hate one another. It is our presumptuously declaring that to be common, which God has cleansed, which has arrayed the different parts of the Church against each other. There is such a thing as a faithful adherence to the truth, without anathematizing all who differ from us. We may guard our ministry and admit none to the office of teacher in our churches, who do not hold that system of doctrine which we believe God has revealed, and which cannot be rejected in any of its parts without evil to the souls of men; but we may still recognise as Christian brethren all who hold the essential doctrines of the gospel, and who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

c. Temperance Question. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. ii., sec. 3.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 483–492.]

This subject came up on the review of the Minutes of the Synod of Pittsburgh. It appears that the question, "Should a retailer of intoxicating drinks, knowing that they are used for the common purposes of beverage, be continued in the full privileges of the Church, and certified as a member in good standing," was referred by that Synod to a committee, who made a report, which was adopted, and is to the effect that no member of the Church should be excluded from its privileges, except for some "offence;" that an offence "is anything in the principles or practice of a church-member which is contrary to the Word of God, or which, if it be not, in its own nature, sinful, may tempt others to sin, or mar their spiritual edification;" that the practice of retailing intoxicating drinks need not be pronounced in its own nature sinful, but that it certainly tempts others to sin, and therefore is an "offence" within the meaning of the Book. But is it such an offence as ought to exclude those who commit it from the privileges of the Church? In answer to this question, the report states that anything which would be

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*," topic same; *Princeton Review*, 1843, p. 461.]

a proper ground for debarring an applicant admission to the Church ought to be considered a sufficient ground of excommunication or exclusion; that anything which essentially impairs or destroys the evidence of Christian character is a bar to admission, and ought to be considered a ground for exclusion. In proof that the practice in question does destroy the credibility of a Christian profession, it is argued that "the man who, at the present time, is ignorant of the effect of the practice referred to, in tempting others to sin and marring their spiritual edification, must be criminally regardless of what is going on around him. And he, who, knowing this, perseveres in the practice, evinces a state of heart directly the reverse of that which is produced by the grace of God that bringeth salvation."

That this is not establishing a new term of communion in the Church, the report argues, because the old and acknowledged condition of communion is, credible evidence of Christian character, and as the practice of retailing intoxicating drinks has been shown to vitiate that evidence and to work a forfeiture of the privileges of Christian communion, we do but enforce the old condition. This report was "adopted by the Synod, and recommended to be read in all the congregations within its bounds." When the committee of the General Assembly reviewed the Minutes of that body, they recommended that they should be approved, with the exception of the above report, because it virtually made "the retailing of intoxicating drinks a test of piety and a term of membership in the Presbyterian Church."

This recommendation gave rise to a protracted discussion. Dr. Lord proposed as a substitute for the report of the committee, "That the records be approved except so far as they seem to establish a general rule in regard to the use and sale of ardent spirits as a beverage, which use and sale are generally to be decidedly disapproved; but each case must be decided in view of all the attendant circumstances that go to modify and give character to the same." Mr. Breckinridge moved the following as a substitute for Dr. Lord's proposition, or rather for the exception in the report of the committee: "But whereas the question has been made before this General Assembly whether the sale of intoxicating drinks, in all cases, shall be a bar to communion in the Presbyterian Church, therefore, Resolved, That while the Assembly rejoice in the success of the temperance reformation, and will make use of all lawful means to promote it, they cannot sanction any new terms of communion." This resolution was rejected, and that offered by Dr. Lord was finally adopted.

Did we not know how liable we all are to have our minds clouded and perverted about the plainest matters, and how easily the evil resident in our nature mingles with everything we do, we should be sur-

prised to find good men differing about such a subject as temperance, and unholy feelings influencing the discussions to which such difference of opinion gives rise. We make this latter remark without any reference to the recent debates in the General Assembly, for we rejoice to believe that throughout the long, animated and exciting discussion, there was not, as one of the audience testifies "the least exhibition of rude deportment or unpleasant feeling." But how is it that there should be such diversity of opinion even in the Assembly on such a subject? To what does this diversity relate? Not to the sinfulness of intemperance; not to the prevalence of the evil, not to the amount of crime, degradation and misery, of which it is the fruitful source, not to the duty of all men to endeavour by precept and example to oppose its progress, not to the great good that has been effected by temperance societies, not to the desirableness of continuing and extending the influence of the reformation already so happily begun; but mainly to certain questions in morals, which are indeed of great practical importance. We believe that the dissensions among good men on such subjects as temperance, slavery, and the like, arise in a great measure from the want of due discrimination somewhere as to the elementary principles of ethics. By elementary, we do not so much mean obvious, as ultimate. Men may agree that a thing is right, but differ as to the grounds of this judgment, and such difference will of necessity produce diversity in the reasons by which they enforce the duty, the means they employ to carry out their views, and the spirit which animates their endeavours. It makes all the difference in the world, whether a thing is wrong in itself, or for reasons extraneous to its own nature. If it is wrong in itself, it is always wrong; it is always the ground of reproach or censure; and it should be opposed in a way entirely inadmissible on the supposition that it is, in its own nature, a matter of indifference. It is evident that it is the prevalent doctrine of our Temperance Societies, and of our self-called temperance men, that the use and sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is in itself an immorality. As to this point there can be no higher authority than the National Temperance Convention held at Saratoga, July, 1841, who declared, "That the tendency of all intoxicating drinks to derange the bodily functions, to lead to drunkenness, to harden the heart, sear the conscience, destroy domestic peace, excite to the commission of crime, waste human life, and destroy souls; and the rebukes and warnings of God in his word in relation to them, in connection with every law of self-preservation and of love, imposed upon all men a solemn moral obligation to cease forever from their manufacture, sale and use, as a beverage, and so unitedly call upon us as men and Christians, not to pause in our work until such manufacture, sale and use, shall be universally abandoned."

This declaration of the immorality of the manufacture, sale and use of all intoxicating drinks as a beverage, being founded, not on the peculiar circumstances of any time or place, but on the inherent nature and tendency of such drinks, is a declaration that their sale and use are, and always have been sinful. And as it is a fact, just as clear as any other fact contained in the Scripture, that God and Christ did not prohibit, but allowed the use of such drinks, we cannot hesitate to say that the above resolution is infidel in its spirit and tendency, however many good men may have been cajoled or driven into the sin of giving it their sanction. It has produced, therefore, its legitimate effects in vitiating the arguments, the measures, and, to a lamentable extent, the spirit of the Temperance Society. It has led to a disregard of the authority of the word of God, to a shameful perversion of its meaning, to shocking irreverence in the manner of speaking of our blessed Redeemer. It has in all these and other ways tended to undermine the foundations of religion, and has given, in many places, an infidel character to the whole temperance movement. It has just as necessarily led to coercive measures in the promotion of the object aimed at, invoking the aid of Church courts and Church censures. It has produced a spirit of denunciation and censoriousness. Good men are represented as bad men, for no other reason than a denial of the false principle above stated, and for their opposition to the arguments by which it is sustained. We refer, as a single example, to the case of Dr. Maclean, one of the most disinterested of men, a man who has more moral worth than would serve for an outfit for a whole generation of such men as ignorantly traduce him; a man, who not only practices upon the principles of total abstinence, but has over and again signed pledges to that effect, who is yet constantly more or less defamed, because he refuses to submit his judgment and conscience to this new and self-created tribunal of moral principle and conduct. Just so long and so far as the false doctrine above stated, is maintained by our Temperance Societies, will it be the duty of the friends of religion and of temperance itself, at whatever cost to themselves, to bear their testimony against it, and resist all measures designed to establish and enforce it.

The New York *Observer* says, in reference to the discussions in the Assembly, that "through the whole progress of the debate not a single expression was heard that could be distorted by the most fastidious ear into a support of that dogma of modern ultraism, which has so often jeoparded the temperance reform; that 'it is a sin *per se* to use or sell intoxicating drinks.' All appeared satisfied, and many expressly declared their willingness to rest the cause on the broad ground of expediency so clearly set forth by St. Paul, in regard to both 'meat and

wine, which they considered as a firm and ample foundation for the glorious superstructure." Our brethren of the Synod of Pittsburgh also, state that they do not affirm the practice of retailing intoxicating drinks, to be in its own nature sinful. We fear, however, there is often a great mistake made as to the proper place of expediency, as it is called, in questions of duty. The principle which the apostle lays down, Rom. xiv. ch. and 1 Cor. viii. ch., is, that it is wrong for us to make such use of our liberty, in things indifferent, as to lead our brethren into sin. This is the general principle, but it is subject to the important limitation that this compliance with either the scruples or weakness of others, must be "for their good to edification. If it would sanction any false doctrine, or tend to establish any false principle of duty, the compliance would itself be wrong; because it is far more important, and far more useful for others, that the truth should be kept pure than that those who are weak or ignorant should not be offended. Paul's precept and example, as well as the very nature of the case, impose this limitation on the principle in question. To avoid giving offence, and to save the Jews from the sin of rejecting the gospel, without a hearing, he circumcised Timothy; but when there was danger that compliance would sanction the doctrine of justification by works, he refused to circumcise Titus. Christ would not comply with the conscientious scruples of the men of his generation, but consented to be called a Sabbath-breaker and a wine-bibber, because he saw their good and the cause of truth required it. It was in the same spirit of enlightened Christian ethics that Luther urged his followers to observe certain religious days, adding, however, if any man says you must do it, then go to your ordinary work as hard as you can.

It follows, therefore, that any rule of duty founded on expediency must be variable. If I am bound to abstain from certain things only because the use of them would do my brethren harm, the obligation exists only when his real good would be promoted by my abstinence. If the obligation arises from circumstances, it must vary with circumstances. If it was Paul's duty at Jerusalem to have his head shaved and keep the law, it was his duty at Antioch to disregard the law and to eat with the Gentiles. If it was his duty under one set of circumstances to circumcise Timothy, it was his duty under another to refuse to circumcise Titus. If it was his duty in Corinth to abstain from eating meat, it was his duty among the Essenes, who made religion to consist in such matters, to eat it. Thus we doubt not, in our day, it is a duty in many parts of the country to practice on the principles of total abstinence; in others, no such obligation may exist; and we suspect in others it is an imperative duty openly to refuse to do it. If in any place such abstinence would countenance false doctrines, or false

principles of morals, or sanction infidel sentiments, or add weight to infidel measures, we ought not to give place by subjection, no not for an hour. Let real love to our brethren, guided by the word of God, direct our conduct, and though we may not all act in the same way, we shall all act right.

It follows also, from the very nature of expediency, that every man must be allowed to decide and act for himself. He is not to subject his conscience or conduct to the judgment of others in such cases. If a thing be indifferent in its own nature, if God has neither commanded nor forbidden the use of it, then I must decide for myself whether it is right to use it or not. It is a question which no man can decide for me, and which depends on whether most good will result from using or not using the thing in question; a point often exceedingly difficult, if not impossible with any confidence, to decide. This is the very principle which Paul so strenuously asserted. While he said it was wrong to eat meat with offence (*i. e.*, so as to cause others to sin), he said also, Let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant, to his own master he standeth or falleth? Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks, and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

It is only stating what has already been said in another form, to say that expediency never can be the ground of any general and peremptory rule of duty as to any specific thing. The general principle is plain and admitted, but the application varies with every man's circumstances, and must be left to each man's conscience. All those general declarations therefore, of the duty of total abstinence, from the use of intoxicating drinks, if they do not rest on the false doctrine, that such use is in its own nature sinful, have no foundation at all. Expediency can only sustain the declaration that the use is wrong in certain circumstances; for if it is wrong under all circumstances, it is wrong in its own nature. Brethren evidently deceive themselves. They say they take the ground of expediency and then proceed to make declarations and lay down rules which can have no other foundation than the inherent evil nature of the thing denounced—Would Paul have laid down the general proposition, that eating meat offered to idols was "an offence," which should exclude a man from the communion of the Church? Does he not say the very reverse, and forbid our making the use or disuse of any thing indifferent in its own nature, a condition of Christian communion? Let brethren ponder the fourteenth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, and we are persuaded they will feel that all such general rules as that under discussion in the Assembly are

anti-scriptural, and subversive of the true principles of morals, as well as of Christian liberty and love. No one doubts that a man may make such a use of his liberty, as to dress, as to manner of living, as to eating or drinking, as shall clearly show he has not a Christian spirit, and for such offence he may be dealt with as the case deserves; but this is a very different thing from laying down the general rule that every man who dresses or lives in a certain way, or who eats or drinks certain things, shall be excluded from the Church. How can any one believe that every man that buys and sells wine, that has a vineyard, or who turns his apples into cider is, the world over *ipso facto*, proved not to be a Christian? Yet this is the length to which the principle involved in the minute before the Assembly must of necessity go. A man may use wine under circumstances which prove that he is a bad man; but this does not prove that the use of wine shows him to be wicked. He may retail intoxicating drinks in a way that shows he is not a Christian, but this does not prove that the act of retailing them vitiates the evidence of his Christian character. If a thing is right or wrong according to circumstances, it cannot be said to be in itself a bar to Christian communion.

It seems strange to us, that any one should contend that making the use or sale of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, is in itself a proof that a man is not a Christian, is not adopting "a new term of communion." If you establish a new test of piety, you certainly thereby establish a new term of communion. If the fact that a man holds slaves, or that he sings Watts' psalms, or that he uses wine, is made to prove he is not a pious man, do you not, in the common and correct sense of the terms, make those things conditions of union with the Church? And is it not plain that by so doing you violate the Scriptures, place yourself above the Master, and undertake to prescribe rules for his house on your own authority and contrary to his will?

One of the greatest evils of these extremes, is that it forces those who oppose them into a false position. Because they oppose an erroneous and injurious method of promoting temperance, they are looked upon as opposing temperance itself; they are said to take part with the drunkard, and to stand in the way of all that is good. Did Christ favour the disregard of the Sabbath, because he exposed the error of the pharisees? Did he promote intemperance, because he resisted the ascetic doctrines of some of the Jews? So his enemies said, but was it true? If evil flows from these discussions about temperance, whose fault is it? Are they to blame who oppose false principles, or they who advance them? Reproach on either side is nugatory. The simple question is, what is true and right? May we not hope that brethren who agree in thinking not only that intemperance is a great sin, but that it is a sin

which calls for special watchfulness and zealous opposition; will agree as to the principles on which that opposition is to be conducted? We may be certain that if the principle on which the temperance reformation is made to rest, is not sound, the whole effort will come to a disastrous end. Those therefore are the best friends of temperance, who contend for the truth.

d. Marriage Question. [*]

[*Directory for Worship*, chap. xi., sec. iii.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 688.]

Overtures were received from the Synods of New Jersey and Alabama, and from the Presbyteries of Troy, New York, West Lexington and from the Western District, requesting the Assembly to send down to the Presbyteries, the question, whether the Confession of Faith should be amended by striking out the last clause of the 4th section of the 24th chap., which says, "The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband's kindred, nearer in blood than of her own."

These overtures were referred to the Committee of Bills and Overtures, who reported, May 22, in favour of sending down the proposed question. Two of the committee, Dr. J. C. Lord and Rev. Hiram Chamberlain, dissented from this report, and recommended the adoption of a resolution declaring any such reference to the presbyteries inexpedient. When the resolution proposed by the committee came up, May 26, Dr. Hoge, moved to lay the whole subject on the table; on the ground that the consideration of it would lead to a long and unprofitable discussion of the merits of the case. This motion prevailed; *yeas* 83; *nays* 55. On the afternoon of May 29th, Dr. Leland, moved to take up the subject; urging that it was not proper to neglect the request of so many of the lower judicatories. He added that although he had always been opposed to such marriages, he was more opposed to refusing to apply, in such cases, to the constitutional source of power for a decision. Dr. Leland's motion was carried by a vote of 56 to 49. The motion was then advocated by Dr. Maclean, on the ground that the request was made by whole synods and presbyteries; that there was so much diversity of opinion in the Church on the subject, that a reference to the presbyteries was the only way by which the question could be settled; that the Confession of Faith ought not to contain anything which hundreds of our ministers and thousands of our Church members, with whom the speaker fully sympathized, believed unauthorized by the word of God: that the other Churches by which we are surrounded, the laws of the land, and the general sentiment of the country were in favour of the lawfulness of marriages which our book condemns.

Dr. Hoge and Mr. Breckinridge spoke against the motion, and the former moved that the whole subject should be referred to a committee of three, to report an amended form of the section to be sent down to the presbyteries. A motion, however, was made to lay the whole subject on the table, which prevailed: *yeas*

[* From Article on "*The General Assembly*"; topic same; *Princeton Review*, 1843, p. 450.]

68, *nays* 63. On the following day, Dr. Hoge moved that the subject be again taken up, with a view to appoint a committee to report on the subject to the next Assembly. He said he made this motion not because he wished any change in this article in the Confession, which he believed to be, as it now stands, in accordance with the word of God, but simply because some of the brethren think we have not treated them and the judicatories of the Church fairly in the disposition of the subject which we have made. The motion to take the subject up was carried: *yeas* 61, *nays* 54; and then without debate or division, it was voted to refer it to a committee of five to report to the next Assembly. It was at first determined to appoint this committee by ballot; but subsequently, on the nomination of Mr. Breckinridge, the following gentlemen were appointed, viz.: Messrs. Hoge, Spring, Leland, Hodge and N. L. Rice.

That this is a difficult and complicated subject, must, on all hands, be admitted. There are three very distinct questions in relation to it, which ought not to be confounded. 1. Is the doctrine now taught on this point in our Confession in accordance with the word of God? 2. If so, ought the article in question to be made a term of Christian and ministerial communion? 3. If not, is the striking out of the clause proposed to be erased, the right remedy for the difficulty?

As to the first of these points there are avowedly three opinions in the Church. The one that the Confession as it now stands is in its strictest sense in accordance with the Scriptures, and therefore that the marriages in question are in such a sense unlawful as to be invalid in the sight of God. Separation of the parties, according to this view, is in all cases an indispensable requisite for admission to the privileges of the Church. The second opinion is, that although the marriages in question are unlawful, *i. e.* contrary to the rule laid down in the Scriptures, they are not, in all cases (*i. e.* the remotest degrees of kindred forbidden in our Book,) invalid. The separation of the parties in such cases, so far from being a duty would be, according to this view, a sin. This view of the subject we believe to be far more prevalent in the Church than the other. Many brethren who are the most strenuous in their support of the Book, are disposed to leave the parties already living in such connections, unmolested in the enjoyment of their Church privileges. But this they could not do, if they believed their marriages to be invalid. This second opinion is founded on the obvious principle of religious ethics that although, in many cases, it may be wrong to enter into certain engagements, yet the engagement, when formed, is binding. That this is a sound principle cannot be doubted, and admits, were it necessary, of abundant illustration. It was against the law of God for the ancient Israelites to form any treaties with the heathen; and yet, in many cases, such treaties when formed were morally binding. It is contrary to the divine will for any man to violate the law of the land, and yet, in a multitude of cases, the mu-

nicipal law regulating marriage, may be violated without rendering the contract morally void. In England, a few years ago, the law forbade any man but a minister of the Established Church to solemnize marriage; the ceremony could be legally performed only at certain places, and during certain hours of the day. Yet no one doubts that a marriage solemnized by a Romish priest, or a Presbyterian minister, or out of canonical hours, was valid and binding in the sight of God, though in one sense contrary to the law of God, by being contrary to the law of the land. But to take a case nearer to the point, God forbids in his word believers and unbelievers to be unequally yoked together. It is laid down as a principle meant to be conservative of the peace and religious character of families, that the people of God should not intermarry with his enemies. Should a minister of the gospel marry a gay, worldly woman, he would certainly violate this principle; and still more obviously would he act contrary to the divine law, were he to marry a skeptic or a heathen. But in no one of these cases would the marriage be invalid. In like manner, God has laid down the general rule that a man should not marry his near kindred. This law cannot be violated with impunity; but it does not follow that every marriage inconsistent with it should be dissolved. About the principle there can be no doubt; whether it is applicable to the case of marriage, depends on the view taken of the general law of marriage. If that law is a moral one, in the highest sense of the term, then no engagement inconsistent with its provisions can be binding, any more than a man can bind himself to commit murder. But if it be a positive law, or only in a secondary sense moral, and therefore dispensable, then the principle is applicable, in all cases where the sacred obligation of the marriage contract is more obligatory than the positive law with which it is in conflict. If a man is in such circumstances that he cannot comply with both of two laws, it is a plain principle that the weaker law gives way, or ceases to be binding. If the law of the Sabbath conflicts with the claims of mercy, it is in that case no longer obligatory; for God will have mercy and not sacrifice. It is not our purpose at present to argue any thing; but merely to state what are the opinions prevailing in the Church in relation to this subject. It is certainly true that while some brethren think all marriages forbidden in our Confession are not only unlawful, but invalid; a much larger number, while they believe them to be unlawful, *i. e.*, inconsistent with the rule laid down in the Scriptures on the subject, believe them to be, in the case referred to, valid and binding.

A third opinion is that the law, as it now stands, is inconsistent with the word of God, forbidding what that word, and the laws of almost all our states, do not prohibit. How large this class of brethren

is we cannot tell. In the northern portion of the Church, they probably constitute a great majority; in the southern and western portions a minority.

The second question is, Whether the law forbidding a man to marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, ought to be made a term of ministerial and Christian communion? This is a grave question. It seems plain that we are not at liberty to make every truth contained in the word of God, a term of communion. This is contrary to the express command of the apostle, and would render the unity of the Church impracticable. It is only those things which are clearly revealed, and which are of such moment that ministers cannot differ about them and be qualified for the office of preachers in the same Church, that should be included in the terms of ministerial communion; and only those about which Christians cannot safely differ, that should be embraced in the terms of Christian communion. Now it is said, we should be very sure that a thing is clearly revealed before we can make the disbelief of it, the ground of exclusion from the Church. The fact that there is such an avowed diversity of opinion on the subject in question, is one of the arguments urged against the clause complained of being retained in our Confession of Faith.

Again, it is urged against the rule that it never was, and practically it cannot be uniformly enforced. Although in one part of the Church it has been carried into effect, in another it has been suffered to lie dormant. So that we have, and ever have had, in our Churches, and at times in our eldership and ministry, men in good standing, who have contracted marriages in violation of this rule. But even this is not the greatest difficulty. Such is the state of opinion in the Church on this subject that uniformity cannot be attained. If it would violate the conscience of a northern presbytery to discipline a brother for such a marriage, it would violate the conscience of many of our presbyteries in the south, to pass the matter in silence. Where the sentiment of the Church is against the marriage, it cannot be overlooked; where the opposite sentiment prevails it cannot be censured. We have heard of a minister who had scarcely more than twelve members of a large congregation who would consent to hear him preach, after his marriage with the sister of his deceased wife; and when he attempted to administer the Lord's Supper, all the elders declined serving. Such a man is as it were excluded from the ministry by public sentiment, before any Church censure can be brought to bear upon him. Now what is to be done? This is a practical question. Shall we agree to differ? or must we separate on this point?

This introduces the third question. Is the erasure of the clause proposed to be stricken out, the proper remedy for the difficulty?

Practically it certainly will not reach it; for as the Book will still condemn marriages within the degrees prohibited in the Word of God, all those sessions and presbyteries who think the marriage in question included in the prohibition, will feel not only authorized, but required to proceed just as if the Book were left unaltered. We shall have just the same diversity of opinion and practice without the clause that we have with it. We have heard it suggested that the best plan would be to leave the Book as it is; and allow the several sessions and presbyteries (as they have ever been allowed,) to pursue their own course in the matter, the General Assembly not interfering to coerce obedience to the rule where the lower court does not feel called upon to enforce it; and acting only when a case is made and brought up by appeal from some lower judicatory. This is substantially the very course the Church has been pursuing the last fifty years; and it is the course we doubt not, in practice, that she will have to pursue for many years to come. This course is attended with no real hardship; because it admits of the free exercise of the different opinions which exist in the Church on the subject. If a man is a member of a session or presbytery who are known to believe the Word of God condemns such marriages, he acts with his eyes open when he contracts them. He has no right to force his brethren to tolerate what they think wrong; or to insist upon being a member of a body against the judgment and conscience of all his fellow members. It may be said that it is an anomalous state for a Church to be in; one presbytery suspending from his office a minister for an act which another presbytery passes without censure. This is very true. But it is, and for fifty years or more, has been the actual state of the Church. And how can you help it? You cannot force all to think alike, and therefore you cannot make all act alike. You must either allow this diversity of opinion and practice, or you must split the Church. Believing as we do that a decided majority of the Church is in favour of the Book, substantially as it now stands, we suspect the course which would give the most general satisfaction is the one just suggested. Leave the Book unaltered, and leave the lower courts to act under it according to the dictates of their own consciences.

Another strong objection against striking out the clause under consideration, is that it will leave the section in a state at once ambiguous and unsatisfactory. It will be ambiguous because it will then say "marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity, forbidden in the word." But there are not a few in our Church who say there is no law relating to this subject in the Bible. Others say that although the 18th chapter of Leviticus relates to marriage, it is no longer binding. Others say it is binding as far as the specified cases go, but no further. Others say it is binding not only as to the

specified cases, but as to the degrees of which those cases are instances. Here are no less than four different views prevailing more or less in the Church, and the Confession, if altered in the manner proposed, decides nothing respecting them, except indeed, by implication that some degrees are prohibited in the Scriptures. If it were said, we must teach no doctrine inconsistent with what is taught in the word concerning original sin, it would be a very unfit clause for a confession of faith or bond of union among brethren.

The section would not only be ambiguous, but it would be satisfactory to no portion of the Church. It would declare that such marriages can never be made lawful by any law of man or consent of parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife. This is the clause which after all gives most trouble, and which the proposed alteration leaves in full force, applying to each and every case prohibited in the word. As a matter of fact, there can be no doubt that a very large number of our ministers and elders do not believe that all these marriages, though unlawful, are invalid. To them therefore, as well as to those who take more liberal ground on the whole subject, the section as it would stand, will be altogether unsatisfactory.

The mere striking out of the last section, therefore, appears to us to be the worst of all expedients. It cannot prevent the diversity of opinion and practice that now prevails; it would render the law in the highest degree ambiguous; and leave it as unsatisfactory to a large part of the Church as it is at present. Whether the committee who have it in charge to report on this subject to the next Assembly, will be able to prepare anything to meet all these conflicting views, remains to be seen. Dr. Hoge, we learn from the proceedings of the Assembly, is in favour of a modified form of the whole section, which, if we are correctly informed, differs from the present, mainly in this, that it does not pronounce all these marriages to be invalid, which is the common understanding of the Book as it now stands. A section which should affirm the continued obligation of the law of marriage, as contained in the 18th ch. of Leviticus; that should state what, in the judgment of the Church, the intent and scope of that law is; and that should leave it open to the Church courts to deal with each particular case according to its merits, might possibly be framed so as to meet the views of the great majority of our brethren.

§ 5. Dismission of Members to other Churches. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. xi., sec. 1.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 628.]

Dr. Leland, from the Committee on Bills and Overtures, reported

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic same. *Princeton Review*, 1851, p. 550.

upon Overture No. 10, from the Presbytery of Baltimore, and submitted the following question: "Shall members of our churches, who may wish to join churches not in correspondence with the General Assembly, receive certificates in the same form as if they wished to join another church in our communion, or in correspondence with the Assembly; or has the Church session done all that it ought to do, when in such cases the good and regular standing of the persons so applying is duly certified?"

On motion, the answer recommended by the committee was laid on the table, and the following, after amendment, was adopted, viz: "This whole subject is one that ought to be left to the sound discretion of the various Church sessions, according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church."

The subject involved in this overture is one of the greatest practical importance. There is nothing on which our ministers and members are more sensitive, than on the question of Christian communion. There is no point on which the great body of them regard the teachings of the word of God more explicit, and therefore as to no point are they more tenacious of their Christian liberty. We may here remark that it is a great infelicity that overtures on such subjects should be so numerous. It is a common infirmity with many men to wish their opinions turned into laws. They think certain things right and expedient, and instead of being content to act on their own judgment, and allow others to act on theirs, they desire their view of the matter to be made obligatory on all their brethren. One good brother, because he thinks the use of organs in churches unauthorized and injurious, becomes very desirous that their use should be absolutely prohibited by authority. Another thinks that a regular dismission of a Church member should be given only in certain cases, and he wishes his private judgment to be turned into a public law. In an extended Church like ours, there are few evils which ought to be more sedulously avoided than excessive legislation. Leave as much liberty to all concerned as possible, if you wish to preserve peace or union.

As to this question of communion, it is well known that there are two very different views arising out of different theories of the nature and design of the Church. The one view is that of the great body of the Christian world, and is the clear doctrine of our standards. It assumes that the terms of Christian communion are unalterably fixed in the word of God, and can be neither increased nor diminished by any human authority. This is one great principle. Another is, that nothing can justly be required as a term of Christian communion, which Christ has not made necessary to admission to heaven. In other words, that we are bound to receive and treat as Christian brethren

all whom Christ receives as disciples. We are not to make ourselves stricter or holier than he. Our standards, therefore, lay down the evidences of piety as the only scriptural conditions of Church communion. Competent knowledge, faith, and holy living are all the Church has any right to demand, because nothing else is demanded by Christ as necessary to communion with himself. As this is the only scriptural principle, so it is the only one that can be carried out. Can the poor African be required to decide the questions between Prelatists and Presbyterians, or between Burghers and Anti-Burghers before he is admitted to the Lord's table? It is out of the question. Every Church must receive, in fact, all whom she regards as the true followers of Christ. Therefore, the lowest terms of salvation are the highest admissible terms of communion. If these principles are correct, it follows that however restrictive are the conditions a Church may see fit to establish as the terms of ministerial fellowship, it must recognize as a sister Church every body which holds and teaches the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, however erroneous it may be in other respects; and, therefore, it cannot with any consistency refuse either to receive members from such Church, or to dismiss them to it. That is, so far as general principles are concerned. For there may be particular cases in which, for special reasons, it is proper to refuse to receive a member from another Presbyterian church, belonging to our own body. All we mean to say is, that any body which we recognize as a Christian Church, we are bound to treat as such, in receiving *worthy* members from them, and in dismissing to them such as desire their fellowship.

The other radically different view of Christian communion is that which is characteristic of our Scotch brethren, and especially of the secession portion of them. They regard the Church so much as a witness for the truth, that they overlook its wider aspect as a "congregation of faithful men," or "the communion of saints." They consider themselves, therefore, as joining in the testimony of any Church with which they commune; and they require all who wish to commune with them to join in their peculiar testimony, whatever it may be. Of course they cannot consistently commune themselves, nor allow their members to commune with any other than their own churches. Even some of the leaders of the Free Church of Scotland seemed, at first, in danger of falling into this false theory. They were in their zeal for cutting off all communion with the Established Church, lest, as they said, they should vitiate their testimony. Happily for them and the cause of Christ, this was a passing cloud. That Church has adhered to the scriptural doctrine, which has ever been held sacred by the great body of Protestants. Christian communion is communion of men as Christians, not as Presbyterians, Methodists, or Episcopalians. We

recognize those with whom we commune, or to whom we dismiss our members, as Christians, and as nothing more. We give no sanction to their peculiarities, whatever they may be. We have so often heard the strongest feeling expressed by our pastors on this subject, that we are persuaded that any attempt of the General Assembly to prevent their enjoying on this subject the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, would be followed by the most unhappy consequences. We rejoice, therefore, in the wise disposition of this matter recorded above.

§ 6. The Right of Church Members to withdraw from the Communion of the Church.[*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. ix. sec. 6.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 127.]

An overture from the Presbytery of Montgomery was presented, asking whether Church sessions have the right, under the constitution, to allow members to withdraw from the communion of the Church who are not guilty of any immoral conduct, and who do not manifest an intention to connect themselves with any other Church. The committee on Bills and Overtures reported through their chairman, the Rev. Dr. Thornwell, that this question ought to be answered in the affirmative. This report was objected to, and an amendment offered that it be answered in the negative. This gave rise to an animated debate, and the previous question having been moved and seconded, the amendment was cut off, and the vote taken on the report of the committee, which recommended an affirmative answer, when said report was rejected by a decided majority. Of the debate on this subject we find the following report in the New York *Observer:*

"Rev. Dr. Humphrey, of Kentucky, moved to strike out the word *affirmative* and insert *negative*. He contended that there are three modes only by which a member could be separated from the Church. 1. By regular trial; 2. By dismission to another body; and 3. By death. If any other way is recognized by the constitution, he should like to have it stated by the committee. The obligation which a man takes upon himself is a vow to God, and God only can absolve him from it. It is a fundamental principle of Protestantism, that while the Church cannot be the *Lord* of the conscience, neither can it interfere to relieve the conscience of its responsibilities. The very nature of the relation makes it an affair with which the Church may not interfere unless immorality shall render it necessary.

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"Other members followed enforcing these views, and illustrating the case by facts and examples.

"Rev. Dr. Thornwell. The point of the overture is entirely misapprehended. It is asked whether persons may withdraw from the Church who have been re-

[*From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic same; *Princeton Review*, 1848, p. 408.]

ceived unadvisedly, and are now satisfied that they are not converted persons, yet are regular in all their private and public duties. It is the custom of the Church when members absent themselves from the communion, to visit them by committee. Suppose a member gives as a reason for staying away, 'I am satisfied that I am not a member of Christ, and when the pastor charged all those to retire who had not knowledge to discern the Lord's body, I was constrained in conscience to obey the command.' What is to be done? Will you discipline him? For what? For doing the very thing which you required him to do, and which if our principles are true, he was solemnly bound to do. What is the object of a trial? Is it not to ascertain whether a man is or not a member of Christ's body? But if he confesses that he is not, it is the best evidence that can be given, and the session may declare the fact to the Church. It was the doctrine of Erastus that the Church was the channel of grace, and had no right to excommunicate members for any cause. But this is not the doctrine of any Christian Church at the present day. Now we hold that union with Christ is the basis of union with the Church, and a credible profession simply declares the fact. Will any Church session undertake to affirm that a man is and shall be a member of the Church, when he tells them that he is not a member of Christ? Certainly not. It is now proposed that in such a case the session shall place him in the same position with the baptized children of the Church, and not make him a heathen and publican.

"Another point. The Protestant Church knows no man unless he is voluntarily subject to her authority: and the vow of subjection is binding no longer than he feels that he has a right to submit to them. The Roman Catholic view is that a man is everywhere bound by his vow to the Church, and that once a virgin, bound by vow, always a virgin, once a monk, always a monk. But with us the vow is not to the Church, but to God, and he will be the judge. We propose no innovation, but the assertion of a right that is inherent in our Church, and ought to be distinctly set forth. Thus we shall separate the chaff from the wheat, purify the Church, and publish the fact to the world.

"The Church has been spoken of as a voluntary society, but there was this obvious feature: A voluntary society prescribes its own rules, but the Church has its laws from its head: they are not to be altered or amended.

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We should judge from this report that there was no essential difference between the parties to this debate; that Dr. Thornwell would not deny that a man's relation to the Church cannot be dissolved at pleasure, and that the opponents of the report of the committee would not deny the justice of his remarks. The difference seems to lie in the use of terms. What is meant by withdrawing from the Church? If it means simply abstaining from the communion table, then we see not how Dr. Thornwell's arguments are to be resisted. It is the duty of all who hear the gospel, to commemorate the death of Christ in the manner which he has appointed. Some, however, have not the qualifications which he has commanded his Church to require in those whom she receives to the Lord's supper. Others are prevented by illness, by providential hindrances, or by scruples of conscience. Now if the

question is whether a Church member may absent himself from the Lord's supper, without justly subjecting himself to suspension or excommunication, we presume no one would be disposed to answer in the negative. He may be in a state of spiritual darkness; he may seriously doubt his own conversion; he may have erroneous views of the qualifications for that service. In all such cases he should be tenderly instructed, admonished, and borne with in all long-suffering and patience. But if he keeps aloof from this ordinance through indifference, or a worldly spirit, he is certainly deserving of censure, first of admonition, and if that prove ineffectual, of suspension. We should therefore be disposed to side with Dr. Thornwell in saying that there are cases in which a session would be fully justified in permitting a member to absent himself from the Lord's supper. But we would not call this withdrawing from the Church. This mode of expression is derived from the Congregational theory of the Church, which makes the regenerate the materials and confederation the formal cause of a Church. A covenant into which certain believers enter with each other, according to this doctrine, makes them a Church. This is a voluntary compact and association, from which any man may withdraw, or from which he may be excluded. But according to the Presbyterian doctrine a man can no more withdraw from the Church, than he can withdraw from the moral government of God. The Church consists of all those who profess the true religion together with their children. Such children are baptized because they are Church members. The only possible way in which they can cease to be members, is either by open apostasy, or excommunication. Suspension from Church privileges is not exclusion from the Church, but simply a refusal to allow the full benefits of Church communion to certain persons for a season, just as a father may withhold from a disobedient son, the privileges of the family circle for a season without disowning him as a child. According to the Presbyterian theory of the Church therefore, no man can withdraw from it. He cannot cease to profess the true religion, except by denying its doctrines, for which he should be cut off. He cannot free himself from the obligation of submitting to the discipline of the Church, of communing with it, and of discharging all the duties of a Church member, any more than he can free himself from the obligation of the moral law. If he neglects his duties, he should be dealt with for his disobedience; tenderly admonished, suspended, or excommunicated as the case may be. Being born within the Church, or professing in baptism the true religion, he has incurred obligations and responsibilities from which he can never free himself, he has assumed a yoke which he can neither cast off, nor have removed by any human hand. The Church is a voluntary society not in the sense that a man may enter

and withdraw from it, at pleasure; but because no one can be forced to enter it, or coerced to remain in it. In the same sense obedience to the moral law must be voluntary. But it does not follow that because a man cannot lawfully be forced to profess the true religion, he may cease to make that profession without censure. While therefore we agree with the majority of the Assembly in saying no man can be allowed to withdraw from the Church, we agree with Dr. Thornwell in thinking he may, in certain cases, be allowed to absent himself from the Lord's table, without incurring the sentence either of suspension or excommunication.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHURCH OFFICERS.

§ 1. Title of Bishop. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. iv.]

WHEN the roll was read in the afternoon of the first day of the sessions of the Assembly [1846], Dr. R. J. Breckinridge moved that the word Bishop be struck out in every case where it was applied to the clerical delegates, and that the word minister be substituted in its place. This motion prevailed by a large majority.

With regard to the title Bishop, there are certain points as to which all parties may be considered as substantially agreed. One is that in the New Testament the title is given to those officers in the Church who are appointed to rule, teach, and ordain. Another is, that the terms Presbyter and Bishop are applied to the same officers. Prelatists long contended against this position, but have at last, with common consent, conceded it. In so doing they have conceded almost the entire ground of argument from Scripture in behalf of prelacy, and assumed the task of proving that though in the apostolic age a Bishop was a Presbyter, and nothing more, in the immediately succeeding age he was a prelate. That is, that during the time of the apostles, the term designated one office, but immediately and forever after a different one. We find while the apostles lived a set of men called Bishops; we find the same thing in the next age, and we are called upon to believe that these men filled offices essentially different. This sudden change in the meaning of a title is unexampled and incredible. A third point beyond dispute is, that though Bishop and Presbyter were convertible terms in the

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*;" topic same; *Princeton Review*, 1846, p. 418.]

apostolic Church, yet as the hierarchical principle gradually gained ground, the term Bishop was appropriated to one class of the clergy, and Presbyter to another, and that the *usus loquendi* of the whole Church for centuries has given this restrictive meaning to the word Bishop.

The question then is, is it desirable to change this long-established usage, and to restore to the word its scriptural meaning. We have no hesitation in saying that if practicable, it would be desirable; but believing it to be impracticable, we regard the attempt as altogether inexpedient. If all Protestant Christendom at the time of the Reformation had reverted to the scriptural usage, and called all invested with the cure of souls, all who had the right to rule, teach and ordain, Bishops, it would have deprived prelatists of an advantage to which they admit they are not entitled, and to which they are more indebted than to any of their arguments, either from Scripture or antiquity. As we admit the office of a Bishop to be a scriptural office, to all appearance, Episcopalians have that office and we have it not. In relinquishing to them the title, the Churches of the Reformation, in appearance, conceded that their ministers were not Bishops, whereas, if those Churches had claimed the title, and thus established a Protestant *usus loquendi* agreeable to the admitted usage of Scripture, making the word Bishop mean a minister of the gospel, prelatists would have been forced to the constant avowal of their real doctrine, viz: that prelates are not Bishops but apostles. This would have placed them on their true ground. But as this was not done, and as the usage of all Churches and of common life, has made Bishop and prelate synonymous, we think it as hopeless a task to attempt a change now as to make the word white mean black, and black white. If all who use the English language would agree that black hereafter should mean white, the change might in time be made, though with great difficulty even then, as all books written before such determination was come to, would have to be expurgated. In like manner, if all Christian nations should agree to revert to the scriptural usage of the word Bishop, its original meaning might gradually be restored. But for any one portion of the Church to effect that change in the meaning of the word, we hold to be impossible; and if impossible, the attempt is obviously unwise. We are glad, therefore, that the motion to substitute the word minister for that of Bishop in the Minutes of the Assembly prevailed, and we hope the matter will rest where it is.

§ 2. Who may Vote in the Election of Pastor. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xv., sec. iv.—*Digest* of 1873, pp. 404, 405.]

The selection of pastors for particular congregations has, in all ages of the Church, been a matter of contention; and great diversity of usage has prevailed in relation to this subject. In prelatical churches, it often rests with the bishop of the diocese; in endowed churches, the right is vested in the patron; in the Dutch Reformed Church, the pastors are chosen by the great consistory, that is, (as elders are elected annually,) by the acting elders, and by all others belonging to the congregation, who have exercised the office of the eldership. In New England, according to the old usage, there were two distinct bodies, the church and the parish; the former consisting of the professedly regenerated, united by covenant, and the latter, of those inhabitants of the neighborhood (or parish) who frequented the church, and contributed to the support of its minister. These bodies voted separately for the pastor, and their concurrence was requisite for a choice. Of the church, only the male members, or brotherhood, voted. In the Presbyterian Church, great diversity of usage has prevailed. Perhaps the most common method is for heads of families, and they only, whether communicants or not, to vote in the choice of pastor. In other cases, all communicants, male and female, adults and minors, and all contributors vote. In others again, the elective franchise is confined to adult members of the congregation.

This diversity of practice betrays great confusion of ideas. There is no one clearly recognized theory by which the practical question is controlled. It is easy to say, a pastor is an ecclesiastical officer, he is a minister of the Church, and therefore only members of the Church can be entitled to a voice in his election. But then the question arises, what is the Church? This is a question to which no one answer can be given. In other words, the term is used in Scripture and in ecclesiastical language in very different senses. The Church, which is the body of Christ, which he loved, and for which he gave himself, is the whole body of the elect. Sometimes the word means the whole body of Christ's true people on earth. Sometimes it designates the true children of God collectively, in some one place; at others, all those who profess the true religion throughout the world, together with their children; sometimes such professors when united in one organization, as when we speak of the Church of England, the Presbyterian, or the Methodist Church; or, in a more limited sense, the first, second, or third church of any place or

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*"; *Princeton Review*, 1863, p. 482.]

city. These are only some of the legitimate meanings of the word; and it is evident that no progress is made in deciding who are members of the Church, until it is settled in what sense the word Church is to be taken. As men differ as to the meaning which they assign to the word, they of course differ on all the points involved in its interpretation. According to the Puritan, or Independent theory, a church is a body of regenerated persons united together by covenant, meeting together for Christian worship and mutual watch and care. According to others, a particular or individual church consists of all baptized persons united as an organized Christian assembly. According to the scriptural and common usage of the term, an individual church is a worshipping assembly of professed Christians. Thus, when we speak of St. Giles' Church, Edinburgh, or the Grand Street church, New York, or the Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, every one understands us to mean the stated worshipping congregations which are thus designated. Thus, in the New Testament, the Church of Antioch, the Church in the house of Aquila. Perhaps the most common meaning of the word in the New Testament, is a worshipping assembly. As any assembly, or congregation of people, was an ἐκκλησία so any stated congregation of worshippers is an ἐκκλησία in the religious sense of the word. The ἐκκλησία Κυρίου is correctly defined to be *coetus cultorum Dei.*

It does not follow that all the members of the Church have the same privileges, any more than that all the citizens of a State have the same rights. The elective franchise, for example, in the State is confined to a small portion of the citizens. All minors, and females, at least, are excluded. So in the Church, different members have different privileges. Some have the right to administer discipline, some to the ordinance of baptism, some to admission of pastors, some to vote for Church officers. The right of particular members depends partly on their gifts and qualifications, partly on the judgment and choice of those authorized to decide in such cases. It is plain, therefore, that the decision of the question, who should be allowed to vote in the selection of a pastor, does not simply depend on the question who are members of the Church. That is one point to be settled, but it is not the only one.

The Puritan or Independent theory of the Church, that it consists exclusively of those who are deemed regenerate, and their minor children, has unfortunately gained ascendency over many of our ministers and members. This is to be attributed partly to the general familiarity with the writings of Owen and other English Independents, but especially to the all-prevailing influence of the ideas and principles of the New England Congregationalists. This theory, however, is thoroughly opposed to the common faith of the Church, and, as we think,

to the plain teachings of the New Testament. It owes its origin to the desire to make the phenomenal agree with the real, the visible with the invisible Church. This can never be realized in this world, and it never was designed that men should accomplish this desirable end. Men cannot read the heart. They cannot discriminate between the growing wheat and tares. The apostolic Churches consisted largely of those who were carnal, and walked as men. The same is true of all Churches since that time. He is a Christian in the sight of God, who is a true believer ; but we must regard and treat as Christians, those who profess the true religion, and are free from scandal. Whether they are regenerated or not, we cannot tell. It is, however, on this erroneous theory of the Church, that many are in favour of restricting the right of a voice in the choice of pastors to communicants.

The second theory on this subject is, that the visible church consists exclusively of those who have been baptized, and consequently, that no unbaptized person is entitled to vote. But this theory is clearly against our standards. Our Book, and the general consent of Christians, teach that the visible Church consists of those who profess the true religion, together with their children. Baptism is one, but not the only way of professing the true religion. Many confessors and martyrs never were baptized. An orthodox Quaker, if regenerated by the Holy Ghost, is a true Christian; and if he confesses Christ with the mouth, is a member of the visible Church. Baptism does not make a man a member of the Church; it is the public and orderly recognition of his membership. Since the recent New England custom of confining baptism to the children of communicants, some of the most respectable and worthy members of our congregations are unbaptized; and, on the other, some of the least worthy members of the community were baptized in infancy. There seems therefore no reason, either on the score of principle or of expediency, in confining the elective franchise to baptized persons.

The truth is, that a church, in the eye of the law, in the general usage of the community, according to the language of the New Testament, and the Westminster standards, is an organized Christian society. Such society may place what restrictions they please on the right of suffrage. They may confine it, as do the Dutch, to the eldership; or to the adult male communicants, or to the communicants whether male or female; or the heads of family, orderly members of the society; or they may throw it open to all contributors, whether adults or minors. We have no established rule, except the general directions contained in the Form of Government on this subject. The security, under our system, is in the Presbyteries. No man can be chosen or installed as pastor over any of our congregations, who has not passed through all

the prescribed trials for ordination, and who has not received the official sanction of his brethren as an orthodox and faithful man.

§ 3. Support of the Clergy. [*]

[*Form of Government*, chap. xv., sec. vi.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 406-408.]

This suggestive and teeming pamphlet has now been several months before the churches, and we presume in the hands of almost all our ministers. We cannot suffer ourselves to think that so much practical wisdom, enforced by the earnest eloquence of Chalmers, can fail to influence for good a multitude of minds. We may not immediately see its effects, but the principles here suggested, the plans proposed, and the motives urged must commend themselves to the judgment and conscience of the readers, and must induce them to act, or at least prepare them to act with greater intelligence and zeal, in the prosecution of the various enterprises in which as a Church we are engaged.

We propose to select from the numerous topics here discussed the support of the clergy, as a subject of a few remarks. That it is the duty of the Church to sustain those who are engaged in preaching the gospel, is not a disputed point. The apostle rests this obligation on the following grounds: 1. The general principle that labour is entitled to a reward, or, as our Saviour expresses it, the labourer is worthy of his hire. This principle, the apostle reminds us, is recognized in all the departments of human life, and has the sanction of the law of God in its application even to brutes, for it is written: Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. 2. It is a simple matter of commutative justice. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter that we should reap your carnal things? If we do you a great good, is it unreasonable to expect you to do us a less? 3. In all countries, and under all forms of religions, true or false—those who minister at the altar are partakers with the altar. 4. It is an express ordinance of Christ that they which preach the gospel should live by the gospel.

It is not, however, every one who preaches the gospel who is entitled to the benefit of this ordinance. In many cases men, who by profession are lawyers, merchants, or mechanics, are at the same time preachers. Preaching, however, is not their vocation; it is not the work to which their time and talents are devoted. It is a service in which they occasionally engage, as opportunity offers, without interrupting their ordi-

[*Article, same title, in review of "*An Earnest Appeal to the Free Church of Scotland, on the subject of Economics, by Thomas Chalmers, D. D.*" *Princeton Review*, 1847, p. 360.]

nary engagements. It is evident that such men, however laudable their motives, or however useful their labours, are not entitled by the ordinance of Christ to live by the gospel. Others, who by profession are preachers, who have been educated and ordained in reference to the sacred office, are at the same time something else, teachers, farmers or planters. They unite with their vocation as preachers some lucrative secular employment. Sometimes this is a matter of choice; more frequently, perhaps, of necessity; sometimes, as in the case of Paul, of disinterested self-denial, that they may make the gospel of Christ without charge. No one can doubt that there may be excellent and adequate reasons why a preacher should be a teacher or a farmer. Nor can it be questioned that every one has a right to judge of those reasons for himself, and to determine whether he will support himself, or throw himself on the ordinance of Christ. But he cannot do both. He cannot support himself and claim the right to be supported by the Church. He throws himself out of the scope of the ordinance in question by devoting his time and talents to the work of self-support. The plain scriptural principle is, that those who devote themselves to the service of the Church, have a right to be supported by the Church; that those who consecrate themselves to preaching the gospel, are entitled to live by the gospel. As this is a truth so plainly taught in the sacred Scriptures, and so generally conceded, it need not be discussed.

A much more difficult question is: What is the best method of sustaining the ministers of religion? In attempting to answer this question, we propose first to state historically and very briefly the different methods which have been adopted for that purpose, and secondly to show that the duty in question is a duty common to the whole Church.

As to the former of the two points proposed for consideration, it may be remarked that under the Mosaic dispensation, the Levites being set apart for the service of the sanctuary, had thirty-five cities with a circle of land of a thousand cubits around the walls assigned to them, and a tithe of all the produce of the ground, of the flocks, and of the herds. The priests were supported by a tithe of the portion paid the Levites; by the first fruits which, according to the Talmudists, were in no case to be less than the sixtieth of the whole harvest; by a certain portion of the sacrifices offered on the altar; by the price paid for the redemption of the first-born among men, and of those animals which were not allowed to be offered in sacrifice. They were moreover exempt from taxation and military duty. Such was the abundant provision which God ordained for the support of the ministers of religion.

Under the new dispensation, our Lord while explicitly enjoining the duty, left his people free as to the mode in which it should be discharged.

From the record contained in the Acts of the Apostles, several facts bearing on this subject may be learned. First, that a lively sense of the brotherhood of believers filled the hearts of the early Christians, and was the effect of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, that in consequence of this feeling of brotherhood, they had all things in common. The multitude of them that believed, we are told, were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common; neither was there any among them that lacked. Acts ii. 41, 47. Such was the effect of the vivid consciousness of the union of believers as one body in Christ Jesus. And such is the uniform tendency of that consciousness, manifesting itself in the same manner in proportion to its strength. Experience, however, soon taught these early Christians that they were not perfect, and that it was not wise to act in an imperfect and mixed community on a principle which is applicable only to one really pervaded and governed by the Spirit of God. As the Church therefore increased, and came to include many who were Christians only in name, or who had but little of the Spirit of Christ, the operation of this feeling of brotherhood was arrested. It would have been destructive to act towards nominal as towards real Christians, towards indolent and selfish professors as though they were instinct with the Spirit of God. This is the fundamental error of all the modern systems of communism. They proceed on the false assumption that men are not depraved. They take for granted that they are disinterested, faithful, laborious. Every such system, therefore, has come to naught and must work evil and only evil, until men are really renewed and made of one heart and of one soul by the Spirit of God. In the subsequent history, therefore, of the apostolic Church, we hear no more of this community of goods. The apostles never commanded it. They left the Church to act on the principle that it is one only so far as it was truly one. They did not urge the outward expression a single step beyond the inward reality. The instructive fact, however, remains on record that the effusion of the Holy Spirit, did produce this lively sense of brotherhood among Christians, and a corresponding degree of liberality.

A third fact to be learned from the history given in the Acts, is that the early Christians looked upon their religious teachers as the proper recipients and distributors of the common property of the Church. They who were the possessors of houses or lands sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. It is obvious that this arrangement supposes an eminently pure state of the Church, and would be intolerable in any other. It is

also obvious that as the Church enlarged, an amount of secular care would thus be thrown on the ministers of religion utterly incompatible with due attention to their spiritual duties. A new arrangement was therefore soon adopted. The apostles said: It is not reasonable that we should leave the Word of God to serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. An example was thus early set of confiding to laymen, *i. e.*, to those who do not minister in word and doctrine, the secular concerns of the Church. And no man can estimate the evil which, in subsequent ages, flowed from the neglect of this example. If, in human governments, it is considered essential to the liberty and welfare of the people, that the sword and purse should be in different hands, it is no less essential that in the Church the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, and the money power should not be united. It was this union which proved in after ages one of the most effectual causes of the secular power of the clergy and of the corruption of the Church.

From what has been said, it is plain that, during the lives of the apostles, the ministry was sustained by the voluntary contributions of the churches. As the Church increased and became more compact as a visible society, this matter assumed a more regular shape. It seems from the beginning to have been the custom for the believers to bring certain gifts or offerings whenever they assembled for the celebration of the Lord's Supper; a custom which, in one form or another, is continued in most Churches, our own among the number, to the present time. As in the early Church the Lord's Supper appears to have been a part of the regular service of every Lord's Day, those contributions were of course weekly. Besides this, there was from a very early period a regular and larger contribution made every month. It appears also that the early Christians inferred from the identity of the Church under the two dispensations, that it was no less the duty of the people of God now than formerly to devote the first-fruits of the earth and a tenth of their income to his service. Long before the payment of tithes was enforced by law, it had thus become a common and voluntary usage. All these contributions were, in each church, thrown into a common stock, under the control first of the deacons, afterwards of the pastor. The amount of the sum thus raised of course varied greatly with the size and wealth of the several churches. And as the pastors of the chief towns gradually became prelates, having many associated and dependent congregations connected with the metropolitan church, this common fund was divided into three portions: one for the bishop, one for the clergy, and one for the poor. The bishop gradually acquired the control of this fund, and in the Synod of Antioch, A. D.,

341, his right to its management was distinctly asserted. Thus also in what are called the Apostolic Constitutions, *can.* 41, the right of the bishop in this matter is placed on the ground that he who is entrusted with the care of souls may well be trusted with their money. *Si animæ hominum preciosæ Episcopo sunt creditæ, multo majus oportet eum curam pecuniarum gerere.*

When the Roman emperor became a Christian and made Christianity the religion of the state, the state assumed the responsibility of supporting the ministers and institutions of religion. This has been done in various ways: 1. By the permanent grant of productive property to the Church, and by authorizing the acquisition of such property by donations, bequest, or purchase. 2. By ordaining the payment of tithes and other contributions. 3. By empowering every parish to tax itself for the support of religion, and giving to such taxation the force of law. This was the method so long in use in New England. 4. By direct appropriations from the public treasury in payment of the salaries of ministers, just as other public officers are paid. This is the method adopted in France since the revolution.

In those countries in which the Church and state are not united, the former is supported either by what may be called ecclesiastical law, or by voluntary contributions of its members. The Romish Church in Ireland affords an example of the former of these methods. With the peculiar wisdom of silence for which that Church is remarkable, it contrives to raise from that impoverished people an adequate support for its hierarchy and priesthood. The priests are supported by the imposition of a regular contribution upon all his parishioners payable twice in the year, at stated times; and by a regular tariff of charges for spiritual services, such as baptism, absolution, the mass, extreme unction and burial. The bishops derive their income from an annual contribution of ten pounds sterling from every priest in their diocese, and by holding as rectors some of the most important of the parishes. In this way, by the stringent coercion of spiritual power, an income more regularly paid than tax or rent, is readily secured.

Where the ministry is supported by the voluntary contributions of the people, it is done by the contributions of the particular congregation which the preacher serves, or from a common fund, or by a combination of the two methods. There are, therefore, three general methods by which the support of the clergy has been provided for. 1. Voluntary contributions. 2. Endowments and the law of the land. 3. By ecclesiastical law. In this country it is not an open question, which of these methods ought to be adopted. We are shut up to the first. And happily public sentiment both in the Church and out of it, has sanctioned as the best, the only method which in our case is practicable.

Admitting that in this country the ministry must be supported by the voluntary contributions of the people, the particular question to which we wish to call the attention of our readers is; on whom does the responsibility of furnishing that support rest? Does it rest on the individual congregation, which the minister serves, or upon the Church as one, and the Church as a whole? Our object is to show that the obligation rests upon the Church as a whole. To prevent misapprehension, however, it is proper to state; That nothing so visionary as that every minister in every part of the country should receive the same salary is contemplated. This would be at once unjust and impracticable. Much less that there should be any permanent fund from the interest of which all salaries should be paid. The principle which we wish to establish would be fully satisfied, if our Board of Missions, instead of giving a tantalizing pittance, were authorized and enabled to give an adequate support to every minister in its service, devoted to his work, *i. e.*, not engaged in any secular employment but consecrating his whole time to the service of the Church.

The first argument in support of the position here assumed, is drawn from the nature of the Church. If, according to the fundamental doctrine of the Independents, believers are the materials of a Church, but a covenant its *form;* if a number of Christians become a Church by covenanting to meet together for worship and discipline; if a Church owes its existence to this mutual covenant, just as a city owes its existence to its charter, so that we may as well talk of a universal city as of a Church catholic, then there is no room for the discussion of this question. No one would think of contending that the obligation to support the municipal officers of any one city rests on the inhabitants of all other cities. If, therefore, the relation which one congregation bears to all others of the same communion, is the same which one city bears to other cities, then of course, every congregation is bound to take care of itself, and is under no obligation, other than that of general benevolence, to sustain the ministry in other congregations, any more than the people of Philadelphia are bound to support the Mayor of New York. But such is not the scriptural, it is not the Presbyterian idea of the Church. It is not the idea which has been living and active in the minds of all Christians from the beginning. Every believer feels that he has a Church relation to every other believer; that he is a member of the same body, partaker of the same Spirit, that he has with them a common faith, hope, and Lord, and that in virtue of this union, he is under the obligation of communion, obedience, and fellowship in all things, to believers as such, and consequently to all believers.

There are certain principles relating to the nature of the Church,

which, though generally admitted in theory, are seldom fairly carried out in practice. Of these principles, among the most important are the following: 1. That the Church is one. There is one kingdom of Christ, one fold of which he is the shepherd, one body of which he is the head. 2. That union with Christ is the condition of unity in the Church. We are one body in Christ Jesus, *i. e.*, in virtue of our union with him; and consequently the Church consists of all who are in Christ. 3. That the Holy Ghost, who dwells without measure in Christ, and from him is communicated to all his people, is the bond of union between them and him, and between the constituent members of his body. 4. That the indwelling of the Spirit in the members of the Church, as it is the ultimate ground of its unity, so it is the cause or source of outward union in all its legitimate forms. The Church is, or ought to be, one in faith, in communion, in worship, in organization, and obedience, just so far, and no farther than the indwelling Spirit is productive of such union. 5. There are certain duties which necessarily arise out of this relation of believers to each other as members of the same Church, and which are co-extensive with the relation out of which they spring. Among those duties are sympathy and mutual assistance. It is because believers are members of one body that they are expected to sympathize with one another, just as the hand sympathizes with the foot, or the eye with the ear in the natural body. It is because believers are the organs and temples of the Holy Ghost that we are commanded to obey one another in the fear of the Lord, to bring our complaints to the Church, and to hear the Church on pain of being considered heathen men and publicans. It is because we are all brethren, οἰκειοι της πιστεως, that we are bound to bear one another's burdens, and to distribute to the necessities of the saints. These are duties we owe to believers as such, and therefore not to those only who may live in the same place with us, or worship with us in the same house. Proximity of residence, or association in worship, is not the ground of these obligations. They are founded on a far higher relation, a relation which exists between all the members of Christ's body, and therefore they bind every member in reference to all his fellow-members.

This being the true idea of the Church, it follows that if perfectly realized, all Christians would be united in one ecclesiastical body. That consummation is now hindered by their imperfection. Though one in faith, it is only within the narrow limits of essential doctrines. Though one in affection, it is not with that full confidence and cordiality necessary for harmonious action in the same external society. So long therefore as the inward unity of the Church is imperfect, its outward union must be in like manner imperfect. This admission, however, does not imply that outward disunion is itself a good; or that

unity ought not to be outwardly expressed as far as it really exists. Consequently those who are one in spirit; whose views as to doctrine, worship, and discipline, are such as to admit of their harmonious co-operation, are bound to unite as one outward or visible Church.

It is universally admitted that those who are united in the same visible Church owe certain duties to each other. In other words, there are certain duties which rest upon them as a Church. It is also admitted that the support of the ministry is one of those duties. If, therefore, the Church is nothing and can be nothing beyond a single congregation, then that duty and all others of a like kind which rest upon the Church as such, are limited to the bounds of the congregation. The obligation of obedience does not extend beyond the list of their fellow worshippers in the same house. The obligation to support the ministry is confined to their own immediate pastor. But if the Church consists of all believers, then the whole body of believers stand in the relation of church-membership, and the duties of obedience and mutual aid in the discharge of all ecclesiastical obligations rest on the whole united body; that is, on all who recognise each other as members of the same Church. It follows, therefore, from the scriptural doctrine of the Church, that the obligation to provide the means of grace for the whole Church, rests on the Church as a whole, and not merely or exclusively on each separate congregation for itself.

The second argument in support of this doctrine is derived from the commission given to the Church. Christ said to his disciples: Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. The prerogative and duty here enjoined, is to teach all nations. For the discharge of this duty the ministry was appointed. Christ, in the first instance personally, and afterwards by his Spirit, calls and qualifies certain men to be organs and agents of the Church in the great work of teaching the nations. To whom then was this commission given? On whom does the obligation of discharging the duty it enjoins rest? Not on the apostles alone—not on the ministry alone,—but on the whole Church. This is indeed a very important point, much debated between Romanists and Protestants. It must here be taken for granted, that neither prelates nor presbyters are the Church, but that God's people are the Church, and that to the Church as such, to the Church as a whole, to the Church as one, was this great commission given. It was originally addressed to a promiscuous assembly of believers. The power and the promise which it conveyed were connected with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit was the source at once of the power here conferred, and of the qualifications necessary for the discharge of the duty here enjoined. And as the Spirit was not given to the apostles, prelates, or presbyters as a distinct class, and to the exclusion of

others, so neither was the commission which was founded on the gift of the Spirit confined to them. The power, the duty, and the promise of the Spirit all go together. Unless, therefore, we adopt the Romish doctrine that the Spirit was given to the apostles as a distinct and self-perpetuating order in the Church, to flow mechanically through the channel of that succession, a living stream through a dead body, we must admit that the commission in question was given to the whole Church. All the prerogatives, duties, and promises which it conveys, belong to the Church as a living body pervaded in all its parts by the life-giving and life-impelling Spirit of God. This, however, does not imply that there is no order or subordination in the Church; or that there is no diversity in the gifts, graces, and offices which the Spirit divides to each one severally as he wills. All are not apostles, all are not prophets, or teachers, or workers of miracles. God is not the author of confusion, but of order and peace in all the churches of the saints. The absence of order, subordination, and peace in any body is an evidence of the absence of the Spirit of God. The Protestant doctrine, that the commission so often referred to was given to the whole Church, is therefore perfectly consistent with the existence and prerogatives of the ministry, not only as a work, but as an office.

The application of the Protestant doctrine just stated, to the subject before us, is obvious and direct. If to the Church as such and as a whole, the duty of teaching all nations has been committed, then upon the Church as a whole rests the obligation to sustain those who are divinely commissioned in her name and as her organs for the immediate discharge of that duty. On what other ground do we appeal to all our members, young and old, male and female, to send forth and sustain our missionaries foreign and domestic? We do not merely say to them that this is a duty of benevolence or of Christian charity, but we tell them it is a command of Christ, a command addressed to them, which binds their conscience, which they cannot neglect without renouncing the authority of Christ, and thereby proving that they are destitute of his Spirit and are none of his. In doing this, we certainly do right; but we obviously take for granted that since the commission to teach all nations has been given to the whole Church, the duty of supporting those sent forth as teachers rests upon the whole Church as a common burden. The command therefore which binds us to support the gospel in New Jersey binds us to sustain it in Wisconsin. All the reasons of the obligation apply to the one case as well as to the other. And we miserably fail of obedience to Christ if we content ourselves with supporting our own pastor, and let others provide for themselves or perish, as they see fit.

A third consideration which leads to the conclusion for which we are

now contending is, that the ministry pertains to the whole Church, and not primarily and characteristically to each particular congregation. When a man is ordained, the office into which he is inducted has relation to the Church as a whole. All the prerogatives and obligations of that office are conveyed though he has no separate congregation confided to his care. A call to a particular church does not convey the ministerial office, it only gives authority to exercise that office over a particular people and within a given sphere. The office itself has far wider relations. If it were true that the ministerial office has relation primarily and essentially to a particular congregation, so that a man can no more be a minister without a congregation, than a husband without a wife (the favourite illustration of those who adopt this view of the matter) then it would follow that no man is a minister except to his own congregation, nor can he perform any ministerial acts out of his own charge; that he ceases to be a minister as soon as he ceases to be a pastor; and that the Church has no right to ordain men as missionaries. These are not only the logical conclusions from this doctrine, they were all admitted and contended for by the early and consistent Independents. This view is obviously unscriptural. The apostle after teaching that the Church is one,—one body, having one Spirit, one faith, one Lord, one baptism, adds that to this one Church, the ascended Saviour gave gifts, viz., apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ. The apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers were not given to particular congregations, but to the Church generally. Of all the preachers of the gospel named in the New Testament it would be difficult to find one who sustained a special, much less an exclusive relation to any one congregation. Paul did not, neither did Barnabas, nor Timothy, nor Titus. That there were pastors in every church is of course admitted, but even in their case, the relation they sustained was like that of a captain of a single ship in a large fleet. While each pastor had a special relation to his own charge, he had a higher relation to the whole Church.

If the doctrine of the Independents on this subject, was true, it might be plausibly argued that the obligation to support a minister rested solely on the congregation who enjoys his services. It is altogether a private affair, analogous to the relation which a man bears to his own family. But if the true doctrine is that the ministry belongs to the whole Church; the whole Church is bound to sustain it. The relation which the officers of the navy and army sustain to the whole country, with propriety, throws the burden of their support on the country as a whole. And such is the relation which ministers sustain to the Church.

A fourth argument on this subject is, that all the reasons which are

given in the sacred Scriptures to show that the ministry ought to be supported, bear on the Church as one body. Our Saviour says the labourer is worthy of his hire. But in whose service does the minister labour? Who gave him his commission? In whose name does he act? Whose work is he doing? to whom is he responsible? Is it not the Church as a whole, and not this or that particular congregation? Again, to whose benefit do the fruits of his labour redound? When souls are converted, saints edified, children educated in the fear of God, is this a local benefit? Are we not one body? Has the hand no interest in the soundness of the foot, or the ear in the well-being of the eye? It is only on the assumption therefore of a most unscriptural isolation and severance of the constituent members of Christ's body, that the whole obligation to sustain the ministry can be thrown on each separate congregation. Again it is an ordinance of Christ that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel. This ordinance certainly binds those to whom the gospel is given, to whose custody it is committed, who are charged with the duty of sustaining and extending it; who have felt its power and experienced its value. They are the persons whom Christ honours by receiving gifts at their hands, for the support of his servants and the promotion of his kingdom. Consequently the whole body of his people have by his ordinance this duty imposed on them as a common burden and a common privilege.

In the fifth place, this matter may be argued from the common principles of justice. Our present system is unjust, first, to the people. Here are a handful of Christians surrounded by an increasing mass of the ignorant, the erroneous and the wicked. No one will deny that it is of the last importance that the gospel should be regularly administered among them. This is demanded not only for the benefit of those few Christians, but for the instruction and conversion of the surrounding population. Now is it just, that the burden of supporting the ministry under these circumstances should be thrown exclusively on that small and feeble company of believers? Are they alone interested in the support and extension of the kingdom of Christ among them and those around them? It is obvious that on all scriptural principles, and on all principles of justice, this is a burden to be borne by the whole Church, by all on whom the duty rests to uphold and propagate the gospel of Christ. Our present system is unjust, in the second place, towards our ministers. It is not just that one man should be supported in affluence, and another equally devoted to the service of the Church, left to struggle for the necessaries of life. As before stated, we do not contend for anything so chimerical as equal salaries to all ministers. Even if all received from the Church, as a whole, the same sum, the people would claim and exercise the right to

give in addition what they pleased to their own pastor. We can no more make salaries equal, than we can make Church edifices of the same size and cost. But while this equality is neither desirable nor practicable, it is obviously unjust that the present inordinate inequality should be allowed to continue. The hardship falls precisely on the most devoted men; on those who strive to get along without resorting to any secular employment. Those who resort to teaching, farming, or speculating in land, in many cases soon render themselves independent. The way to keep ministers poor, is to give them enough to live upon. Observation in all parts of the country shows that it is the men with inadequate salaries who become rich, or at least lay up money. It is not, therefore, because we think that the ministry, as a body, would have more of this world's goods if adequately supported by the Church, that we urge this plea of just compensation. It is because those who do devote themselves to their ministerial work are left to contend with all the harassing evils of poverty, while others of their brethren have enough and to spare. This we regard as contrary to justice, contrary to the Spirit of Christ, and the express commands of his word. Let the Presbyterian Church ask itself whether it has ever obeyed the ordinance of Christ, that they who preach the gospel shall live by the gospel. It is obvious that this never has been done. And if we ask, why not? we can find no other answer than that we have not adopted the right method. We have left each congregation to do the best it can; the rich giving themselves little concern how the poor succeeded in this necessary work. We do not see how the command of Christ ever can be obeyed, how anything like justice on this subject ever can be done, until the Church recognizes the truth that it is one body, and therefore that it is just as obligatory on us to support the gospel at a distance as around our own homes.

Sixthly, the advantages which would be secured by this plan, are a strong argument in its favour. It would secure a great increase in the amount of time and labour devoted to ministerial work. We have no means of ascertaining with accuracy what proportion of our ministers unite with their sacred office some secular employment, nor what proportion of their time is thus diverted from their appropriate duties. It may be that one-third or one half of the time of the ministry of our Church, taken as a whole, is devoted to secular business. If this estimate is any approximation to the truth and it has been made by those who have had the best opportunity of forming a correct judgment, then the efficiency of the ministry might be well nigh doubled if this time could be redeemed from the world and devoted to study, to pastoral duties, and the education of the young.

Again, it would exert a most beneficial influence on the character of the ministry. How many men, who from necessity engage in some secular work, gradually become worldly-minded, lose their interest in the spiritual concerns of the Church, and come to regard their ministerial duties as of secondary importance. It is a law of the human mind that it becomes assimilated to the objects to which its attention is principally directed. It is almost impossible for a minister whose time is mainly devoted to worldly business, to avoid becoming more or less a worldly man. A very respectable clergyman, advanced in life, who had felt this difficulty, recently said, there was nothing about which he was more determined than that if he had his life to live over again, he would never settle in a congregation that did not support him. It is very hard to draw the line between gaining a support and making money. It is difficult to discriminate in practice between what is proper, because necessary, and what all admit to be derogatory to the ministerial character. How often does it happen that the desire of wealth insinuates itself into the heart, under the guise of the desire for an adequate support. Without the slightest impeachment of any class of our brethren, in comparison with others, but simply assuming that they are like other men and other ministers, it is obvious that the necessity of devoting a large part of their time to secular employment, is injurious both to their own spiritual interests and to their usefulness. Every thing indeed depends upon the motive, with which this done. If done as a matter of self-denial, in order to make the gospel of Christ without charge, its influence will be salutary; but if done from any worldly motive it must, from the nature of the case, bring leanness into the soul. It can hardly, therefore, be doubted that few things, under God, would more directly tend to exalt the standard of ministerial character and activity in our Church, than a provision of an adequate support for every pastor devoted to his work. How many of our most deserving brethren would the execution of this plan relieve from anxiety and want. Many of them are now without the ordinary comforts of life; harassed by family cares, oppressed with difficulty as to the means of supporting and educating their children. It would shed an unwonted light into many a household, to hear it announced that the Presbyterian Church had resolved to obey the ordinance of Christ, that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel. Such a resolution would kindle the incense in a thousand hearts, and would be abundant through the thanksgiving of many to the glory of God.

Again, this plan would secure stability and consequent power to the institutions of religion in a multitude of places, where every thing is now occasional, uncertain and changing. Our Church would be thus en-

abled to present a firm and steadily advancing front. Congregations too feeble to-day to support the gospel at all, would soon become, under the steady culture thus afforded to them, able to aid in sustaining others. A new spirit of alacrity and confidence would be infused into the ministry. They would not advance with a hesitating step, doubtful whether those behind will uphold their hands. When a missionary leaves our shores for heathen lands, he goes without any misgivings as to this point. He has no fear of being forgot, and allowed to struggle for his daily bread, while endeavouring to bring the heathen to the obedience of Christ. He knows that the whole Church is pledged for his support, and he devotes himself to his work without distraction or anxiety. How different is the case with multitudes of our missionaries at home. They go to places where much is to be done, where constant ministerial labour is demanded, but they go with no assurance of support. The people whom they serve may greatly need the gospel; it ought to be carried to them, and urged upon them, but they care little about it, and are unwilling to sustain the messenger of God. The Church does not charge itself with his support. It is true he is labouring in her service and in the service of her Lord, but he is left to provide for himself, and live or starve as the case may be. This is not the way in which a Church can be vigorously advanced. It is not the way in which Antichrist advances his kingdom. No Romish priest plants a hesitating foot on any unoccupied ground. He knows he represents a Church; a body which recognizes its unity, and feels its life in all its members. Is it right that we should place the cause of Christ under such disadvantage; that we should adopt a plan of ministerial support, which of necessity makes the Church most feeble at the extremities, where it ought to have most alacrity and strength? Truly the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

The great recommendation of the plan for which we contend, is that it is right. And if right it must be healthful in all its influences. If the Church acts on the principle that it is one, it will become one. If from a conviction of the brotherhood of all believers, it acts towards all as brothers, brotherly love will abound. The sense of injustice which cannot fail on our present plan to corrode the feelings of our neglected brethren, will cease to exist. The sympathies of the more prosperous portions of the Church, will become more enlisted in the welfare of those less highly favoured. By acting on the principle which the Holy Spirit has prescribed for the government of the Church, the Church will become more and more the organ and dwelling place of that Spirit, who will pervade it in all its parts with the glow of his presence, rendering it at once pure and prosperous, instinct with the power and radiant with the beauty of holiness.

We do not anticipate much opposition to the principles which we have attempted to advocate. We do not expect to hear any one deny the unity of the Church; nor that it is the duty of the whole Church to sustain and propagate the gospel; nor that the ministry belongs to the Church as one body; nor that every minister is engaged in the service of the whole Church; nor that it is just, scriptural and expedient that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel. Nor do we expect that any one will deny that it is a logical sequence from these principles that the obligation to support the ministry rests as a common burden on the Church which that ministry serves. The objections which we anticipate are principally these. First, that there are many inefficient men in the ministry who ought not to be supported by the Church, and who need the stimulus of dependence on their congregations to make them work. In answer to this objection we would say, that we believe the difficulty is greatly over-estimated, and that the inefficiency complained of arises in a great measure from the necessity which so many of our ministers labour under of providing for their own support. There is indeed no plan which is not liable to abuse. But we have in this case all the security which other Churches have who act on the principle for which we contend. We have the security arising from the fidelity of sessions in guarding admissions to the Church; in the judgment of presbyteries in selecting and training men for the ministry, in ordaining them to the sacred office, and in superintending them when they come to discharge its duties. We have the security which the Board of Missions now have for the fidelity and efficiency of those who are engaged in its service. It will be observed that the plan contemplated does not propose to render the minister independent of his congregation. The principal part of his support, if a pastor, must, in most cases at least, come from them. It is only proposed that the Board of Missions should be authorized and enabled so to enlarge their appropriations as to secure an adequate support to every minister devoted to his work.

A more serious objection is the expense. In answer to this, we would ask whether it would require as large a portion of the income of believers as by divine command was devoted to this object under the old dispensation? Is the gospel of the grace of God less valuable, or less dear to our hearts than the religion of Moses to the hearts of the Israelites? Would it require a tithe of the sum which the heathen pay for the support of their priests and temples? Would it cost Presbyterians in America more than it costs Presbyterians in Scotland, or more than it costs our Methodist brethren? What ought to be done can be done. What others do, we can do. What the cause needs are, with the blessing of God, two things, an intelligent comprehension

of the grounds of the duty, on the part of the Church, and some man or men to take the thing in hand and urge it forward.

§ 4. Warrant and Theory of Ruling Eldership. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. v.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 116.]

I. Ruling elders are the representatives of the people. It is well known that, under the Old Testament, the people had great authority in the theocratical government. They were, indeed, originally and properly the chief depositaries of the governing power; they were convened and consulted on all important occasions, and without their consent nothing could lawfully be done. In the institution of the Christian Church, this principle of popular control was clearly recognised. The epistles are all, with few exceptions, addressed to the people; the apostles, presbyters and *brethren* were united in the decision of important questions: the people chose their own Church rulers, concurred in acts of discipline even when exercised by the apostles, (see 1 Cor. ch. vi.). It is also admitted that this right of the people to take part in the government of the Church, was constantly recognised for several centuries after Christ. Even as late as the time of Cyprian, we find that zealous champion of prelacy, admitting that he could properly do nothing without the presbyters and the people.

The power thus inhering in the people, they exercised generally through representatives, chosen by themselves. This was so common and familiar a mode of exercising their prerogative of ruling that we find in the Old Testament the expressions, "the whole congregation," and "the elders of the congregation," interchanged as meaning the same thing. What the elders of the people did, or said, the people are represented as having said or done. And in later times, the governing body among the people of God was composed of priests, Levites, and elders of the people. So also in the Christian Church the principle of the people acting by their representatives, was introduced, we doubt not, by the apostles themselves. This appears plain from the titles given to certain Church officers, from the usage of the synagogue, and from the custom of the early centuries.

These two principles of popular control and of the exercise of the power which belongs to the people through representatives chosen by themselves, gives to Presbyterianism its distinctive character. In our system the people have not only the right to elect their own Church officers, but they have controlling influence in the government of the Church; exercising that influence through the elders, who are their representatives. This is the distinctive character of the eldership.

[* A pamphlet entitled "*The Elder Question*," and signed "*Geneva.*"]

This is evident from the formal definition of the office contained in our Form of Government, (ch. iii. § 2.) "The ordinary and perpetual officers in the Church are bishops or pastors, *the representatives of the people*, usually styled ruling elders, and deacons." Again, (ch. v.) "Ruling elders *are properly the representatives of the people*, and chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline in conjunction with pastors or ministers. This office has been understood by a great part of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to be designated in the Holy Scriptures by the title of governments, and of those who rule well, but do not labour in the word and doctrine."

In the standards of the Scotch Church, speaking of officers, it is said some are extraordinary, "others ordinary, as pastors, teachers, and *other church governors* and deacons." p. 565. Again: "As there were in the Jewish Church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the Church, so Christ, who has instituted government and governors ecclesiastical in the Church, hath furnished some in his Church, besides the ministers of the word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same, when called thereunto, who are to join with the ministers in the government of the Church; which officers Reformed Churches commonly call elders." pp. 572, 573.

"A Presbytery consisteth of ministers of the word, and such *other public officers* as are agreeable to and warranted by the word of God to be Church governors, to join with the ministers in the government of the Church." p. 578.

"Pastors and teachers, and *other Church officers*, (as also other fit persons when it shall be deemed expedient) are members of those assemblies which we call synodical, where they have a lawful calling thereunto." p. 582.

Ruling elders, then, are "public officers," "representatives of the people," chosen by them to join with ministers in the government of the Church.

II. This view of the office of elder gives it great honour. The people of God receive in the Bible the highest titles of dignity. They are "the body of Christ," "the temple of God," "priests and kings;" ministers are their servants for Christ's sake. Even angels are their ministering spirits. To be their representatives, to act in their name, is as high an honour as the Scriptures anywhere attribute to any class of Church rulers as such.

III. This view of the office places the divine right of ruling elders on a sure and satisfactory foundation. The people, as remarked above, have the right to co-operate in all acts of discipline and government. This privilege was granted by Christ, recognized in the early ages of

the Church, and re-asserted by Protestants at the time of the Reformation. This right, in all ordinary cases, they exercise through officers chosen by themselves as their representatives. Inasmuch, therefore, as the people have this prerogative, their representatives appear in ecclesiastical courts, and take part in the government of the Church, not by courtesy, but as a matter of right.

IV. The power which this view of their office attributes to the eldership, is not only great, but controlling. In the primary Church court, or session, they are always the majority, and in all other courts they are, as a general rule, as numerous as the ministers. Nothing can be done without their concurrence. They may admit and exclude from the Church, in opposition to the ministers; they may even secure the admission or deposition of ministers, in opposition to the pastors. For if in any presbytery, the elders being more numerous than the clergy, should vote for the ordination of a man, and all the ministers against it, he must be ordained. In all Church courts, therefore, the people, by their representatives have an effective, and in many cases a controlling power.

V. The definition given in our standards of the ruling elders as representatives of the people, determines the nature and extent of their powers. These powers cannot be learnt from the title elder, because that is ambiguous, being applied to two distinct classes of officers. In some of the early Churches these officers had distinct titles, viz. either presbyters and delegates, or presbyters and *seniores plebis*, who are expressly distinguished from each other. It is to be observed that ruling elders are never called presbyters in our book, and the proper scriptural title for them is not presbyter, but "governments." Calvin, in his Institutes, Lib. iv. c. 5. §8, says, "In calling those who govern in the Church, indiscriminately, bishops, presbyters, pastors, and ministers, I have followed the example of the Scriptures, which use these terms without distinction, for they give the title bishop to all who are invested with the ministry of the word." Having proved this from Titus i. 5, Phil. i. 1, Acts xx. 17, he adds, "It is to be observed that we have hitherto spoken only of those offices which are concerned in the ministry of the word; nor does Paul mention any other in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, which we have cited. But in Rom. xii. 7, and 1 Cor. xii. 28, he enumerates others, as powers, gift of healing, &c. &c. Two of these are permanent offices, government, and care of the poor. Governors I suppose to have been elders (*seniores*) chosen from among the people, who presided with the bishops over the correction of manners and the exercise of discipline." According to this, there were two classes of officers, the one who both ruled and preached, and to whom the Scriptures give the titles, bishops, presbyters, pastors,

ministers; and the other called governments, who were *seniores ex plebe delecti*, elders chosen from the people, to join with the former class in the government of the Church. This is precisely the system of our book, in which the title Bishop or Presbyter is never given to any but ministers of the word. Much confusion has arisen from the use of the word elder and presbyter as synonymous; and many false conclusions have been drawn from the assumption that because both words mean an old man, therefore, every elder is a presbyter, and may do whatever a presbyter may do. The same argument would prove that every alderman is a senator, and every senator an alderman.

It is not, therefore, from the ambiguous title, elder, but from the authoritative definitions of the nature and duties of the office, we are to deduce the powers of the ruling elder. Elders are declared to be the representatives of the people. That this is their distinctive character is plain, because ministers are never so called, and because elders are so designated for the very purpose of distinguishing them from another class of officers. It is also plain that their powers flow from their distinctive character as representatives of the people, and cannot extend beyond the limits fixed by that relation. A representative is one who acts for another, who does for him what he has a right to do in his own name. It is evident that the representative cannot do what his constituents are not authorized to do. Congress has the right to make laws, because the people, in this country, whom they represent, have all the attributes of sovereignty. It is equally evident that the power of the representative is not necessarily co-extensive with that of his constituents; while he cannot do what they have no authority to do, it does not follow that he can do all that they may be entitled to perform. His power depends upon the extent of his commission. His authority may be limited, as in the case of Congress and of our Generel Assembly, by a written constitution, or it may be limited by a higher authority; as in the case of the Church rulers, by the word of God. Hence, it no more follows that ruling elders, as representatives of the people, can exercise all the functions which inhere primarily in the people, than that Congress may do all that the people are assumed to have a right to do. Because as the power of Congress is limited by the constitution of the country, so the power of ruling elders is limited by the constitution of the Church, and by the word of God. According to Protestants, all Church power vests primarily in the people. But while this power vests primarily in the whole Church, it is to be exercised through certain organs, or officers, whose qualifications and powers are laid down in the word of God.

It is admitted that ministers constitute one class of Church officers. Their qualifications are given minutely in the Scriptures. They must

be blameless in faith, manners, and report; they must be apt to teach; fit to rule; and what they have received they are enjoined to commit unto faithful men who may be able to teach others also. Their powers, therefore, as specified and granted in the word of God are, teaching, (which includes the administration of the sacraments;) ruling, and commissioning faithful men. These powers God has joined together, so that he who has one of them, has all. The very fact that these duties and powers are committed to a certain class of officers, proves that they are not to be exercised by the people themselves. But while the Scriptures plainly teach that these powers are granted to a class of officers distinct from the people, they also teach that the people have a right to judge of the qualifications of their own officers, to determine who they shall be, and to take part with them in the government of the Church. And this right they exercise partly in person, as in the election of their Church rulers, and partly by their representatives, who appear in their name in all Church courts, to deliberate and vote on all questions which may come before them.

Thus while all power vests primarily in the whole Church, certain functions of that power, viz: teaching, and commissioning faithful men, are committed by Scripture and our constitution to one class of officers; while co-operation in all acts of government and discipline belongs to the people or their representatives. And as, in the ordinary state of the Church, the people have neither by the word of God, nor by the constitution of the Church, the right to preach, administer the sacraments, or ordain, so neither have their representatives.

VI. This view of the nature and duties of the office of ruling elder, is everywhere asserted or assumed in our standards. This is evident, 1. From the names or titles given to this class of officers. They are never called ministers, bishops, stewards, or pastors. Nor are they ever called without qualification presbyters. As the Greek word for *deacon* is used in a general sense for all Church officers, and yet is the specific title of one particular class of officers; so the word presbyter may be taken in a wide sense, including even apostles, and yet is the definite title of ordinary ministers of the word, and is never applied in its specific sense, and without qualification to any who are not ministers. The proper title of the ruling elder, according to our book, is, "representatives of the people." Or as it is in the Scottish standards, "public officers," "Church governors," *seniores plebis*, "elders of the people;" *gubernatores ex plebe delecti* as Calvin expresses it. 2. From the formal and authoritative statement of the nature of the office. Ruling elders are declared to be representatives of the people, chosen to exercise government and discipline in conjunction with pastors and ministers. 3. From the nature of the duties and powers assigned to

them. Nothing is ever attributed to them which does not suppose and arise out of their representative character, and comport with the limitation of their office to participation in the government of the Church. They are members of the Church session "for the spiritual government of the congregation." Form of Government, ch. 9, sec. 6. They are delegated to sit in presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly; they appear in these bodies as representatives of the people; for it is said, "every congregation, which has a stated pastor, has a right to be represented by one elder," ch. 10, sec. 3. The elder, therefore, represents the congregation; he does not represent his fellow-elders in the session, but the people. Wherever he appears, he appears in that distinctive character; and as representing the people of God, he has a right to deliberate and vote on all questions which come before the body to which he is sent.

VII. The opposite theory concerning this office is inconsistent with our standards and subversive of Presbyterianism.

1. By teaching that ministers and elders are of the same order, it merges into one, offices which our constitution and the word of God declare to be distinct. The permanent officers of the Church are stated in our book to be, ministers of the word, representatives of the people, and deacons. By calling the second class "representatives of the people," they are as much distinguished from the first class as from the third; and it is as clearly denied that ministers are representatives as that deacons are. But the new theory affirms that ministers and elders appear in presbytery on precisely the same ground; and sit and act as representatives. Now there is a sense in which ministers may be said to represent the people, inasmuch as they exercise a function included in the general commission given to the Church; but elders are representatives in a very different sense, as they are chosen to act in the name of the people, and to join with ministers in doing those things which the people themselves, as distinguished from the ministers, have a right to do. To affirm that both classes of officers are in the same sense representatives, is to destroy the peculiar, distinctive character and value of the eldership.

2. This theory subverts our system also by teaching that the minister obtains his right to rule and to sit in presbytery, by his election to the eldership by a particular congregation, and in virtue of his representative character; whereas the word of God and our Book teach that the right to rule, to preach, to administer the sacraments, and to ordain, belongs to every minister in virtue of his office. If a man is ordained a presbyter, he has, by authority of Scripture, all these rights; and he cannot be deprived of the one any more than of the others. He has indeed no right to exercise his authority either to preach or to rule

in a particular congregation without their consent; but their election no more makes him a ruler than it makes him a preacher. Though he may not be a pastor of a particular congregation, and consequently have no right to act as such, yet as a member of presbytery he has the right to rule, because such right belongs to his office, and because all the churches under the supervision of that presbytery consented to his exercising his functions as a member of presbytery, when, by their representatives, they consented to his ordination. The opposite doctrine on this particular point, viz., that no man should be ordained *sine titulo*, or can be a presbyter except in virtue of his election by a particular Church, arose partly out of the jealousy of the clergy, who feared intrusion on their own bounds, and partly out of the obvious impropriety of such ordinations in countries where the whole ground is occupied by settled ministers. But to convert this rule of expediency into a principle; to say that because a man should not be made a presbyter when he has no sphere for the exercise of the functions of his office, he therefore owes that office to his having a particular sphere for its exercise; and that he cannot be a presbyter except in virtue of his connection with a particular church, is as much as to say a man cannot be a physician without a prescribed number of patients, or a captain if not in actual command of a ship, or a general unless when at the head of a brigade. Owen consistently carries out this doctrine, and maintains that as no man can be a bishop or presbyter but in relation to a particular congregation, no Church has a right to ordain a man to preach to the heathen (Works, vol. xx. p. 457). When a theory comes to such an issue, it may fairly be assumed to have broken its neck. In the Apostolic Church all ministers ruled. They met together with the apostles and brethren to decide important questions; they formed churches, they ordained elders, and yet not one in ten of those ministers was a pastor, or sustained any special or permanent relation to any particular church. Presbyterians do not believe that Timothy was the pastor of Ephesus, or Titus the bishop of Crete.

3. Again this theory subverts our system by making all elders ministers. By common consent bishop and presbyter are convertible terms. If a man is a presbyter, he is a bishop, and if he is a bishop, he is a presbyter. Even prelatists admit this to be true as far as the language of the Bible is concerned. But according to the Scriptures, a bishop is and must be a teacher; he must be "apt to teach." Titus was commanded to ordain *presbyters* if any be blameless; "for a *bishop* must be blameless as a steward of God, ... holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Titus i. 5–9. Nothing is plainer from Scripture and antiquity than that presbyters were bishops,

and that bishops were rulers, teachers and ordainer. This is our constant argument against Episcopalians, and it is so decisive that the most learned and candid of that class admit its conclusive character. That is, they admit that if a man is a presbyter, he is, as far as Scripture and the early Church are concerned, a teacher, ruler and ordainer. After having proved this, and rested our cause upon it, as against prelatists, we cannot turn round and say that a man's being a presbyter is no proof that he is a teacher and ordainer. If a presbyter, he is by our own showing a bishop, and if a bishop, then both a preacher and an ordainer. To maintain therefore that ruling elders and ministers are of the same order, that they have the same presbyterate, is to maintain that elders are ministers of the word and sacraments. We are commanded not to make a man a presbyter unless he is "apt to teach;" we are therefore shut up by this new doctrine to abolish the office of ruling elder; we are required to make them all preachers.

4. Again, the inconsistency of the new theory with our standards, becomes perfectly glaring when compared with the chapter of the Form of Government which treats of the ordination of ruling elders. The theory assumes that elders are as much presbyters as ministers are; that ordination to the presbyterate is the act of the presbytery; that if a man is ordained a ruling elder he needs no further ordination when he becomes a minister. Compare all this with Ch. xiii., of the Form of Government. It is there said: 1. That the congregation shall elect ruling elders. 2. That the minister, after sermon, shall state the warrant and nature of the office. 3. He shall propose certain questions, first to the candidate, and then to the people. 4. When these questions are satisfactorily answered: "The minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate, by prayer, to the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be,) and shall give to him and the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion." Here it is to be remarked, first, that the whole chapter relates to deacons as much as to elders. It prescribes the form in which "elders and deacons" are to be ordained. And, secondly, the ordination is not the act of a presbytery, but of one individual minister. This cannot be evaded by saying that the minister acts in the name of the session, or parochial presbytery, because the book contemplates the case of the ordination of elders when no session exists. Nor will it avail to say that the minister acts in the name of the presbytery; for this is not only gratuitous and without evidence, but is in contradiction with the fact. Not one word is said of the presbytery in the whole context. The presbytery is not at all brought into view in the whole service; it is as purely a ministerial act as the administration of baptism or of the Lord's supper. The theory therefore breaks down entirely. It

cannot by possibility be reconciled with this chapter. Nothing is said of the imposition of hands, nor of the co-operation either of the session or presbytery in the act of ordination. Yet this is part of our system to which we are as much bound to adhere as to the method prescribed for ordaining ministers. The error lies not in saying that, according to our system, the ordination of a presbyter must be by a presbytery; but in saying that elders are presbyters in the same sense with ministers. If they are, they must be ordained in the same way; but in point of fact, the book prescribes a different way; and therefore the two classes of officers are not of the same order. A man who is ordained a ruling elder does not become a presbyter, so as not to need ordination by a presbytery, when he becomes a minister. We get rid of all these contradictions by adhering to our book. Ministers are stewards, bishops, presbyters; elders are the representatives of the people. The former must be ordained by the presbytery; the latter must be ordained by the minister in the presence of the people.

5. The new theory is only a modified system of prelacy. It asserts that elders are bishops, presbyters, ministers. Yet the pastoral office is declared to be "the first in dignity and usefulness." The pastor is the standing moderator of the session composed of bishops or presbyters; he is not amenable to them; cannot be tried by them; he ordains them. What becomes then of our ministerial parity? What is prelacy, if this superiority of one minister to others is not one of its essential elements? This doctrine, if introduced into our system, therefore vitiates its whole nature.

6. There is, however, a different element in this theory which legitimately leads to congregationalism. It makes ministers and elders sit in Church courts as representatives of the people, and being of the same order the Church session is a competent ordaining body, capable of perpetuating itself. This is very much the plan on which the New England churches were originally organized. In the chapter on Congregationalism, in Baird's recent work on "Religion in America," the writer of the chapter, who is said to be a distinguished Congregational minister, says: "The officers are of two sorts, elders and deacons. When the Congregational churches of New England were first organized, two centuries ago, the plan was that each church should have two or more elders; one a pastor, another charged with similar duties, under the title of teacher, the third ordained to his office like the other two, a ruling elder, who with his colleagues, presided over the discipline and order of the church, but took no part in the official and authoritative preaching of the word, or in the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Thus it

was intended that each Church should have within itself a presbytery, or clerical body, perpetuating itself by the ordination of those who should be elected to fill successive vacancies." As far as it goes, we have here the essential features of the new theory. Each congregation chooses a body of men, who are all equally presbyters, having the same ordination and vested with the power to ordain. This system rapidly subsided into the form in which congregationalism now exists in Massachusetts. This new doctrine, therefore, if we may learn anything from history, must either, in virtue of its making elders, bishops and ministers, and yet setting the pastor up as their official superior, issue in prelacy; or in virtue of making both ministers and elders, in the same sense presbyters and representatives of the people, issue in congregational independency.

The doctrine of our standards is simple and consistent. Ruling elders are not bishops, or ministers; they are not presbyters in the same sense as preachers are, but governors, "representatives of the people," appointed to take part with ministers in the government of the Church. They are entitled to be present in every Church court, with full authority to deliberate and vote. This view puts great honour upon the office; it establishes its divine right; it invests it with great authority; it defines its duties; it harmonizes with our whole system, and is every where asserted or assumed in our standards. Whereas the opposite doctrine, by making elders bishops, makes them of divine right ministers of the word and sacraments, as well as ordainers, and thus subverts our whole system of government, and tends, by a logical necessity, either to prelacy or congregationalism.

§ 5. Rights of Ruling Elders. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. v.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 116.]

Rights of Ruling Elders. By Calvin. The Presbyterian. Nos. 614—618.
Rights of Ruling Elders. By Presbyter. The Presbyterian. Nos. 621—626.

The subject discussed in the series of papers above mentioned, has assumed an importance which forces the consideration of it on all the friends of our Church. The question at issue is: Have ruling elders the right to join in the imposition of hands in the ordination of ministers of the gospel? Those who answer in the affirmative say that there are but two orders in the ministry, elders and deacons: of the first order, there are two classes invested with different offices, though belonging to the same order; to the one class belongs the function of ruling, to the other those of ruling, teaching and administration of the sacraments. "We hold," says Presbyter, "to an identity of order, but

[* Article, same title, *Princeton Review*, 1843, p. 313.]

diversity of office." Presbyterial ordination admits the recipient to the order of elders or presbyters; election by the people, or installation by the presbytery invests him with the office of ruling or teaching elder, as the case may be, "and thus it follows upon general principles that a two-fold ordination is superfluous and unnecessary, and might be consistently dispensed with, were it not for the express provision of the *lex positiva*, the constitution of the Church."* In other words, the theory and the constitution are in direct conflict. It is strange that the shock of this collision did not waken the Presbyter from the pleasing dream that he is laboring to bring the practice of the Church into harmony with its laws. His theory would lead to a practice which he admits the constitution condemns. He must, therefore, acknowledge either that the constitution is in conflict with itself, enjoining a practice inconsistent with its principles, or that his theory and that of the constitution are two very different things. His theory requires, nay, admits of but one ordination; the constitution requires two; one to the office of ruling elder, and a second when a ruling elder is made a minister. It is impossible, therefore, that Presbyter and the constitution can hold the same doctrine.

It is easy to see the source of the mistake into which he has fallen. He says ministers and elders are of the same order, but have different offices; ordination confers order and election by the people, or installation confers office. Now if it should turn out that ordination confers office, there is of course an end of the whole argument. The word *order* is one of vague import. It is often used in the sense in which it is employed by Presbyter to designate a class of persons distinguished by some common peculiarity from the rest of the community. In this sense the military are an order; so are the clergy, and so, in many countries are the nobility. Now the only way in which a man can be admitted into any order, is by appointing him to some definite office or rank, included in that order. The only way in which a man is introduced into the military order, is by a commission conferring on him a certain rank or office in the army; and to introduce a man into the order of nobles, something more is necessary than a vague patent of nobility; he must be created a baron, earl, marquis or something else included in the order. And in like manner no man is introduced into the order of the clergy in any other way than by conferring upon him some clerical office. Ordination, therefore, confers order only because it confers office. Need the question even be asked whether the doctrine of Presbyter, that ordination confers order, and election or installation, office, is consistent with our constitution? "Ordination," says the Westmin-

* Presbyter, No. II.

ster Directory, "is the solemn setting apart of a person to some public Church office." Our constitution is no less explicit. It prescribes the mode in which "ecclesiastical rulers should be ordained to their respective offices." With regard to the ruling elder, it is said, after the preliminary steps have been taken, "The minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate, by prayer, to the office of ruling elder." In like manner it speaks of the preaching elder, being "solemnly ordained to the work of the gospel ministry." Ordination to office, therefore, is the only ordination of which our constitution has any knowledge.

If then it is the plain undeniable meaning of our constitution, that ordination confers office, that it constitutes a man a minister or ruling elder, and not merely introduces him into the order of presbyters, it seems to us that the whole foundation of the argument under consideration is swept away The argument rests on a false assumption as to the nature and design of ordination. Now it is a principle, which is universally admitted by all denominations of Christians, except the Independents, that the right to ordain to any office in the Church belongs to those who hold that office, or one superior to it, and which includes it. A minister ordains ruling elders because he is himself a ruling elder as well as a minister. The only ground, therefore, on which the right of ruling elders to take part in the actual ordination of ministers of the gospel can be maintained, is that they hold the same office. But this cannot be asserted with any show of regard to the constitution. Every page relating to the subject, plainly teaches that they have different offices. It tells us that the ordinary and perpetual officers in the Church are pastors, elders and deacons; that the pastoral office is the first in dignity and usefulness, the duties of which are mentioned in detail; that the ruling elder holds a different office, the rights and duties of which are also particularly mentioned. All this is so clear that it is admitted as an indisputable fact. Presbyter complains that Calvin entirely misapprehends the ground taken by himself and his friends in supposing that they hold the identity of the offices of teaching and ruling elders. No one, he says, "has ever stated or contended for such a principle, or anything like it." "We hold to identity of order but diversity of office."

We may remark, in passing, that in the light of this admission, his rebuke of Calvin for saying that the minister "has a right to take an official place above" the elders, seems somewhat unaccountable. This, he says, if it means any thing, means that "the teaching elder or presbyter is, as a matter of right, officially above the ruling presbyter; the one is preferred (*prælatus*) above the other, holds a higher rank, forms another and distinct order, thus making two orders, which, with the deacons, makes three orders in the ministry. If this is not prelacy,

what is it? . . . This is not diocesan episcopacy or prelacy, it is true, but what is just as bad in principle, viz: parochial episcopacy or prelacy, and only differs from the former in this, that in that case one bishop or presbyter is preferred (*prælatus*) above the presbyters of a diocese."* How often does it happen that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light! Here are we making ourselves the laughing-stock of other denominations, by our disputes about the first principles of our organization. Presbyterians have time out of mind been contending for parochial in opposition to diocesan episcopacy, when it turns out at last that the one is as bad in principle as the other; that both are equally inconsistent with Presbyterianism! It is but the other day we saw in the *Presbyterian*, if we mistake not, an argument in favor of our system, derived from the fact that there were three hundred bishops in one council in the north of Africa; sixty bishops in a province not larger than New Jersey; fifty in another; forty in another. This was appealed to in proof that parochial and not diocesan episcopacy then prevailed, and parochial episcopacy was held to be Presbyterianism. But it seems it is no such thing; that if we "once admit the official inferiority in order or rank of the ruling elder to the preaching elder, then is Presbyterian parity destroyed, and prelacy virtually established."† Now what says our book on this subject? Presbyter admits that the office of the minister differs from that of the elder. If they differ, the one may be higher than the other. The book, in speaking of bishops or pastors, says their office is "the first in the Church for dignity and usefulness." There are then three permanent officers in the Church—bishops, elders, and deacons, and of these the bishop is pronounced the first in dignity and usefulness. Is this not official superiority? If a general is the first officer in an army, is he not officially superior to a colonel? If our constitution supposes a parity of office among ministers and elders, why is it said that the minister "shall always be the moderator of the session?" Why in the case of his absence are the session directed to get a neighbouring minister to act as moderator, and only when that is impracticable, are they allowed to pro-

* Presbyter, No. I.

† The words "order or rank" in the above sentence, add nothing to its meaning. It is "official superiority" of the minister to the elders that Presbyter pronounces to be prelacy. This is evident, because Calvin said nothing about order in the sentence which is the ground of Presbyter's charge of prelacy; he said simply that the minister "had an official place above" his elders. This Presbyter says is "out and out" the prelatical principle. If the "teaching elder is as a matter of right officially above the ruling presbyter," then, he says, parity is destroyed, and prelacy is established.

ceed without one? On the other hand, the constitution directs that "the moderator of the presbytery shall be chosen from year to year." There is no such superiority of one minister over another, as to authorize his acting as the perpetual moderator of the presbytery. When an elder is to be tried, he is arraigned before the session; but process against a gospel minister must always be entered before the presbytery. Why is this, but that a man has a right to be tried by his peers? If so, then the elders are not the peers of the ministers; they are not officially his equals, though personally they may be greatly his superiors. Now as our book calls the pastor of a congregation a bishop, and never gives that title to elders, as it declares his office to be the first in dignity in the Church, as it constitutes him the perpetual moderator of the session, confers on him the right to ordain ruling elders, and declares that he is amenable, not to the session, but to the presbytery, it establishes parochial episcopacy, just as much as the canons of the Church of England establish prelacy or diocesan episcopacy. This is Presbyterianism; the Presbyterianism of Geneva, France, Germany, Holland, Scotland, and of our fathers in America; and if we are now to have a different kind, we must get a new book.

If then it is admitted that ministers and ruling elders hold different offices, and if as has been clearly shown from the constitution, ordination confers office, the inference seems unavoidable, that those only who hold the office of a minister of the gospel can confer that office upon others. Presbyterians deny the right of ordination to the civil magistrate; they deny it, under ordinary circumstances to the people; they deny it to any, who have not themselves been invested with the office conferred. Thus much concerning Presbyter's argument that ordination confers order, and election office, and therefore that all who belong to the order of presbyters may join in the ordination of ministers of the gospel.

We wish to say a few words respecting the argument from Scripture. The reasoning of our brethren from this source, seems to be founded on the high, *jus divinum*, principle, that there is a definite and complete form of government, laid down in the word of God, from which the Church has no right to deviate; either by introducing new officers. or judicatories, or by modifying the duties of those therein mentioned. That Presbyter adopts this principle is plain. In his fifth number he says, there are but two grounds on which the office of ruling elder can be maintained, "either of human expediency or of divine warrant. If upon the former, then it is a human device, though a very wise and useful one, and worthy to be retained as a matter of sound public policy. . . . If the ruling elder is not a scriptural presbyter. and

his office a divine institution, then of course we claim for him no part of the powers of ordination, or any other presbyterial power; it would be manifestly inconsistent to accord him any, and in this view our constitution has done what it had no right to do, viz., added to the appointments of God, as to the government of the Church. If the ruling elder be a scriptural presbyter, and his office a divine institution, then we are bound to take it as we find it instituted according to the fundamental law of the Church, the word of God, without adding to, or taking therefrom, and to accord to it such powers as are there granted, and to withhold none which are not there denied." In remarking on Acts xiv. 23, where it is said that the apostles ordained "elders in every church," he says, if these were all preaching elders, it "is fatal to Presbyterianism." Again, "If the ruling elder be not a scriptural presbyter, but a mere layman, an officer of human appointment, why say so, and let him be shorn of all his assumed presbyterial powers as well as a part." We call this the high-toned *jus divinum* principle, not because it asserts the fact that the office of ruling elder existed in the Apostolic Church, and was expressly instituted by Christ, but because it asserts the absolute necessity of such express appointment; declares that the want of it is fatal to Presbyterianism; and that we are bound to have the office precisely as the apostolic churches had it; and that we violate the command of God if we either add to its powers, or detract from them.

The whole argument of Presbyter, on this subject, is founded on the assumption that there is a complete system of government laid down in the Scriptures, to which all Churches are by divine authority required to conform. We shall show that this is not the ground assumed in our standards, and that it is untenable. There are certain principles in which all Presbyterians are agreed, and for which they think they have a clear scriptural warrant. For example, that the apostles had a general superintendence and control over the Churches; that they appointed no successors to themselves in that general supervisory office; that they committed the government of the Church to presbyters, whom they directed to ordain others to the same office; that of these elders, some ruled while others laboured in word and doctrine; and that in many Churches, if not in all, deacons were appointed for the care of the sick and poor; and that the Church should act as one, as far as her circumstances will permit. We maintain, therefore, in opposition to prelatists, that there is no scriptural authority for any officer having, as a successor to the apostles, power, over many churches; and that every thing we find in Scripture is opposed to the establishment of such an office. On the other hand, we contend against Independents and Congregationalists, that the government of the

Church, the right of discipline and ordination, as well as the authority to preach and administer the sacraments, was committed to the rulers and not to the members of the Church. We maintain that Christ has, in his infinite wisdom, left his Church free to modify her government, in accordance with these general principles, as may best suit her circumstances in different ages and nations. Having constituted the Church a distinct society, he thereby gave it the right to govern itself, according to the general principles revealed in his word. If it be objected that this leaves many things in our system to rest on no better ground than expediency, that it makes them what Presbyter calls "human devices," the answer is, that if Christ has given his Church the power of self-government, what the Church does in the exercise of that power, if consistent with his revealed will, has as much his sanction as it well could have under any theory of Church government. If Paul says the civil powers are ordained of God, so that they who resist, resist the ordinance of God, although God has not revealed even a general system of civil polity, we see not why the same is not much more true with respect to the Church.

That this is the true doctrine on this subject is evident, in the first place, from the absence of any express command binding the Church in all ages to conform her mode of government in every respect to the example of the apostolic churches. If Christ and his apostles had intended to make such conformity a matter of perpetual obligation, it is fair to presume they would have said so. As they have nowhere given or intimated such a command, no man has now the right to bind the conscience of God's people in this matter. Again, that the apostles never meant to make their example in all points of this kind, a perpetual law for the Church, is plain from the fact that they did not themselves pursue, in all particulars, the same plan in all places. There are some general principles to which they seem to have adhered, but it is far from being certain, or even probable, that all the apostolic churches were organized exactly after the same model. This indeed was hardly possible in that day of inspiration and miraculous gifts, which the Spirit distributed to every man, according to his own will; so that some were apostles, some prophets, some teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. According to another enumeration, some were apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. According to still another, some had the gift of prophecy, some that of the ministry, some that of teaching, others that of exhortation, others that of ruling, and others, that of showing mercy. It is a perfectly gratuitous assumption that these gifts were confined to the presbyters and deacons of the Church; and if not so confined, they must have produced a state of

things and a mode of administering the word and ordinances and government of the Church, very different from any which is now actual or possible. Again, we know that the apostles were accustomed to go into the Jewish synagogues and preach the gospel; if the majority of the people, with their rulers, believed, from all that appears they left them without any change in their organization. But if "divers were hardened, and believed not," they "departed and separated the disciples." We know that presbyters were ordained in all the churches; and it is probable deacons were also generally introduced, as we know they were at Jerusalem and Philippi. In addition to deacons, we know that deaconesses were in some instances appointed, but we have no evidence that this was the universal practice. It is a very common opinion that in some churches the teachers were a distinct class from that of preachers and rulers. Again, it is plain that in those places where the number of converts was small, there was but one Church under its own bench of elders; but in others, where the disciples were so numerous as to form several congregations, as in Jerusalem and probably in Ephesus, we know not how they were organized. We know they were under the government of presbyters, but whether each congregation had its own bench of elders, as with us, or whether all were under one common body, as in some of the consistorial churches of France, is more than any man can tell. Again, in those places where an apostle permanently resided, as at Jerusalem, it is impossible that the government of the Church should not, for the time being, be somewhat modified by that circumstance. An apostle had a right to ordain whom he pleased; he had authority over presbyters; and could exercise discipline in his own name. Considering all these circumstances, we think the conclusion irresistible, that while the apostles adhered to the great principles above referred to, they varied the details of Church organization to suit the circumstances of particular places and occasions. If this is true, then of course we are not bound to conform in all points to their example, for their example was not uniform.

That this is the doctrine of our Church on this subject, is plain from the express letter of her constitution, and from her practice. We, in common with all other Churches, have acted, and must act on this principle. Our constitution declares that synods and councils are an ordinance of God for the goverment of the Church, but for the particular constitution and mutual relation of such councils, she asserts no express command or uniform apostolic usage. It is declared to be "expedient and agreeable to Scripture and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the Church should be governed by congregational, presbyterial and synodical assemblies. In full consistency with this belief, we embrace in the spirit of charity, those Christians who differ

from us, in opinion or practice, on these subjects." Though we have a divine warrant for the government of the Church by presbyters, where is our scriptural warrant for our mode of organizing Church sessions? Where do we find it said that one presbyter shall be the perpetual moderator of that body? or where is the express warrant for saying that such presbyter must be a minister? Our book says that ruling elders are the representatives of the people, and so, according to our system, they undoubtedly are; but where do the Scriptures assign them this distinctive character? It is said that the apostles ordained elders in every Church, but can we prove that they made one class of those elders any more the representatives of the people, than the other? Again, we have a divine warrant for synods in the general, and for parochial presbyteries in particular, but where is our express warrant for the peculiar organization of our presbyteries? These are not only permanent bodies, but in a great measure self-perpetuating, and are invested with judicial authority over all the parochial presbyteries within their bounds. Admitting that this is not only expedient and agreeable to Scripture, which is all our book asserts, but sustained by an express divine warrant, where have we any such warrant for the mode of constituting these bodies? If, as Presbyter maintains, all presbyters have "common presbyterial powers," and if we are forbidden either to add to or detract from those powers, will he please to produce his warrant for saying that *all* the preaching elders within a certain district shall have a seat in presbytery, and only one in three or one in ten of the ruling elders? If all have, by divine right the same powers, will he give us the scriptural authority for making this distinction? The same questions may be asked with regard to the constitution of our synods, as permanent bodies, excluding two-thirds of our presbyters from any immediate voice in their deliberations, and exercising jurisdiction over all the presbyteries within their bounds.

It appears then the principle on which Presbyter's whole argument is founded is unsound. That principle is that the Church is bound to adhere exactly to the model of Church government laid down in Scripture; and that she is required to produce an express divine warrant for every part of her system; that she is not only barred from creating any new office, but from modifying the rights and duties of those at first established. We maintain, on the other hand, that while there are certain general principles laid down on this subject in the word of God, Christ has left his Church at liberty, and given her the authority to carry out those principles. This we have endeavoured to prove from the absence of a command binding the Church to exact conformity to the example of the apostles; from the fact that the apostles themselves did not adopt any one unvarying plan of Church orga-

nization; and from the undeniable fact that every Church upon earth, our own among the rest, has acted upon this principle and introduced many things into her system of government for which no express scriptural warrant can be produced. If this is so, then even if it were conceded that all presbyters originally received one ordination, and of course held the same office, of which some discharged one duty and some another, according to their gifts, it would not follow that the Church is now bound to concede the same powers and rights to all presbyters, any more than she is to grant them all a seat in presbytery and synod. In other words the principle now contended for is not only unreasonable, and contrary to the practice of the people of God in all ages, but it cannot be carried through without essentially modifying our whole organization.

There is another view which must be taken of this scriptural argument. It has already been shown not only that the principle on which this argument is founded is untenable, but also that the argument itself is unsound. The argument is—ordination confers order; all therefore who belong to the same order have an equal right to ordain; preaching and ruling elders belong to the same order; therefore they have a common right to ordain. We have shown, that according to our constitution, ordination confers office; that only those who have the same office have the right of ordaining to that office, and therefore as, under our constitution, the ruling elder does not hold the same office with the preaching elder, nor one that includes it, he has not the right to join in the actual ordination of ministers of the gospel. Both parties to this discussion see and admit, that the only thing that gives it any importance, is the principle involved in it. The real question at issue is, Are ministers and elders to be considered as holding the same office? It is now our object to show that the principles assumed on the other side lead by a logical necessity, to an affirmative answer to that question, and of course to the abolition of the office of ruling elder, and to the subversion of our constitution.

The principle now assumed is part of a simple, plausible, consistent theory of Church government, but one very different from ours. That theory is, that the apostles ordained a bench of elders in every Church, to whom the whole oversight of its instruction and government was committed; that these elders received the same ordination and held the same office and possessed the same rights and powers; but as some had one gift or talent and some another, it occurred, in practice, that only some preached while others ruled. This difference, however, resulted from no diversity of office, but simply from difference of gifts. All had an equal right to preach and to administer the sacraments as well as to rule. The arguments in support of this theory are derived partly from

the usage of the Jewish synagogue, and partly from what is said in the New Testament. Bishops and presbyters are never mentioned together, as though they were different officers, the latter term being used to include all the officers of the Church except deacons; Paul addressed the elders of Ephesus as one body, having common responsibilities and duties; in writing to Timothy he gives, among the qualifications of elders, aptness to teach; he makes no distinction between the two classes, but having said what elders should be, he immediately proceeds to speak of deacons. From these and other circumstances, many have inferred that all presbyters in the apostolic churches had the same office, and the same rights and duties. This was Vitringa's theory; and Presbyter quotes and adopts Vitringa's statements. But Vitringa was a decided opposer of ruling elders as a scriptural office. So in all consistency must Presbyter be. He is in fact laboring for the abolition of the office.

At the time of the formation of our present constitution, there were one or two prominent men in our Church who held the same doctrine, but they were opposed to our whole system, and complained bitterly that the Synod insisted on "cramming Scotland down their throats." The late Dr. James P. Wilson was another advocate of this theory; but he was the most zealous opposer of ruling elders our Church ever produced. In his work on the "Primitive Government of Christian Churches," he says one of his principal objects was to show "the illiteracy of making mute elders a characteristic of the primitive Church." "Had," he says, "there existed mute elders in the apostolic churches, deacons would have been unnecessary. Elders must 'feed the Church,' and be 'apt to teach.'" He everywhere maintains that presbyters had the same office, though they differed in their gifts, graces, and talents; some being best qualified for governing, others for exhorting and comforting, and others for teaching. He therefore says that 1 Tim. v. 17, "expresses a diversity in the exercise of the presbyterial office, but not in the office itself."*

We say that Presbyter's principles lead to the abolition of the office of ruling elder, not because others who have adopted those principles have discarded the office, but because such is their logical consequence.

* Pp. 282, 283, *et passim*. Dr. Wilson carried his theory through, so far that he never had any elders in his church. He says, "We ordained deacons and called them elders, for that was the custom." He considered the constitution, ch. xiii. § 2, as giving him this liberty. It is there said, "Every congregation shall elect persons to the office of ruling elder, and to that of deacon, or *to either of them*." We do not vouch for the fact, but we have often heard it asserted that he never associated his nominal elders with himself in the government of his church, kept no sessional records, or at least never produced them before presbytery.

He says first, we are bound to have the office precisely as it was first instituted; and secondly, that all presbyters had a common ordination and common presbyterial powers. If so, we say they had a common office; for how can identity of office be proved if it is not established by common designations and titles, by common duties, by common characteristics and qualifications, and by a common ordination? This is precisely the argument we use against prelatists to prove that bishop and elder have the same office. "Those," says Dr. Owen, "whose names are the same, equally common and applicable unto them all, whose function is the same, whose qualifications and characters are the same; whose duties, account and reward are the same, concerning whom there is, in no place of Scripture, the least mention of inequality, disparity or preference in office among them, they are essentially and every way the same." If this argument is good in one case, it is good in another. If it proves that bishops and presbyters had the same office, it certainly proves that all presbyters had also, especially if all had the same ordination. In opposition to all this, the mere fact that some elders preached and some ruled, no more proves diversity of office, than the fact that some bishops taught and others exhorted, that some were pastors and others missionaries, establishes the existence of as many different offices. The legitimate conclusion from these principles is not only that there is no such scriptural office as that of ruling elder; but that it ought to be abolished.

Another conclusion to which these principles necessarily lead is, that the Church session must be invested with the power of ordaining ministers of the gospel. If all presbyters have by divine right equal authority to ordain, and if the session is in fact a presbytery, who has a right to say they shall not exercise a power given them by Christ? It is clear that this is a right that cannot be denied to the session. This is a conclusion from which Presbyter and his friends, we presume, have no disposition to shrink. We see it asserted that no scholar has yet found a single case in the writings of the fathers of the first three centuries, in which the word *presbytery* is used to mean anything else than the pastors and elders of a particular church;* and hence if the ordinations of that period were presbyterial they were performed by a Church session. We are told also that the parochial presbytery or Church session of Antioch, deputed Paul and Barnabas on a great mission, "laid their hands upon them," and that these apostles gave account of themselves when they returned.† Now when we remember that Paul received his apostleship neither from men, nor by man; neither by human authority nor by human intervention, but by

* Spirit of the Nineteenth Century, vol. i. p. 459. † Do., p. 460.

Jesus Christ; that he constantly denies he received either instruction or authority from the other apostles, and felt it to be so necessary to assert his full equality with those inspired messengers of Christ, that he refused to make any report to them, except privately, (Gal. ii. 2) lest he should appear as their deputy; when we consider all this, then we must admit, that if Paul was the missionary of the session of the Church of Antioch, there is no presbyterial act to which a session is not competent.

It deserves, however, to be remarked that there does not appear to have been any ruling elders in the Church session of Antioch. We read: "There were in the Church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, Barnabas" and four others, of whom one was the apostle Paul. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." If this was a Church session, it was composed of "prophets and teachers."

Another consequence which has heretofore been drawn from the principles under consideration, and one which it will be found difficult to avoid, is that the parochial presbytery is the only one for which we have any scriptural warrant. This conclusion must be greatly confirmed if the fathers of the first three centuries knew nothing of any other presbytery than the pastor and elders of a particular church. Of course our synods, which are but larger presbyteries, are in the same predicament. But even if the existence of these bodies can, by any ingenuity of logic, be sustained, their composition must be entirely altered. For if all presbyters have by express scriptural warrant the same rights, then, on Presbyter's principles, it cannot be allowed that all of one class and only a small portion of the other, should be allowed a seat in those bodies.

We believe, therefore, that it is undeniable that the principles on which Presbyter proceeds are subversive of our constitution. The measure now urged is the first step of a revolution; the beginning of the end. The abolition of the office of ruling elder; ordinations by Church sessions; the abrogation of our presbyteries and synods, or, at least, their organization on an entirely different plan from that now adopted, we believe to be the logical consequence of this theory. It is only the first step that can be successfully resisted, for if that is granted the whole principle is conceded.

We wish to have it remembered that it is neither the one nor the other of the two leading principles of Presbyter, taken separately, that we regard as of such serious consequence. It is the union of the two; the assertion that we are bound by allegiance to our Lord, to adhere

exactly to the usage of the apostolic churches; and in connection with this the assertion that all presbyters have the same ordination and the same presbyterial powers. The unavoidable conclusion from this latter position, is that all presbyters had in the apostolic churches the same office. The question whether in the beginning the difference between the two classes of presbyters was official or simply *de facto;* whether the preaching elder was ordained to one office, and the ruling elder to another; or whether both received the same ordination and performed different duties of the same office, according to their several gifts or talents, is a question we have not discussed. It is one, moreover, which our constitution has intentionally left undecided, and is in our view, of very subordinate importance. But if taken in connection with the principle that we are bound to adhere exactly to the apostolic model, it becomes a vital question, and if decided as it must be on the ground assumed by Presbyter, it must subvert our whole system. For if he first binds us to exact conformity, and then leads us to the conclusion that all the early presbyters had the same office, it follows of course that all our presbyters must have the same office, the same qualifications, the same right to preach and administer the sacraments. If these rights inhere in their office they cannot be taken away. Nor does the authority to exercise them depend upon the election of the people. A man ordained to the office of the gospel ministry, may go where he will, (so he violates no right of others) and act as such. We can on these principles have no ruling elders such as we now have; and all our courts, from the session to the General Assembly, must be composed of ministers; if presbyters hold the same office and are equally entitled to preach as well as rule.

But according to the principle recognized from the beginning to the end of our constitution, it matters little how this question about the primitive elders be decided. Christ has not made his grace to depend on the details of external organization; nor has he bound his Church to any one exact model of ecclesiastical discipline. If in the early churches it was expedient and easy to have several presbyters in the same church, all clothed with the same office; and if we find it better, in our circumstances, to have one minister, assisted by a bench of elders, we have a divine right so to order it. If after the manner of the synagogue, there was in every church a presiding officer or bishop, surrounded by other presbyters, authorized either to teach or rule as they had ability, we are obedient to this model, in having a bishop and elders in every congregation, even although the difference between our bishop and elders be now official and not merely a difference of gifts. If it is now difficult to find one preaching presbyter of suitable qualifications for each congregation, while it is easy to get many men of the re-

quisite leisure, wisdom and piety, to join in ruling the house of God, where is the command of Christ that forbids our making a division of labor, and ordaining men to different offices for the discharge of these different duties? This liberty of carrying out and applying the general principles of the Scriptures, our Church and every other Church, has exercised and must exercise. It is a liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and which no man may take away.

Into the historical part of this question, our limits already so inconveniently transcended, forbid us to enter. We believe that it is admitted that the present practice of all the Reformed Churches is against the new theory, and of course the measure we are now urged to adopt will raise another barrier between us and all other Presbyterian denominations. For some time after the Reformation in Scotland, ruling elders were annually elected; which of itself creates a presumption that they were not considered as having received a common ordination with the ministers of the gospel. The only evidence that they joined in the ordination of ministers that we have seen, amounts to this: Ministers were then ordained with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, elders were members of the presbytery, therefore elders joined in the imposition of hands. Presbyter uses a similiar argument in a different case: Timothy was ordained with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, elders were members of the primitive presbyteries, therefore elders laid hands on Timothy. It is easy to reply: Presbyter was ordained with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery; ruling elders are members of our presbyteries; therefore ruling elders laid their hands on Presbyter. This argument is just as conclusive in this last case, as in either of the former. Facts cannot be proved by syllogisms.

The great argument for the right of elders to join in the ordination of ministers, derived from the constitution, is that ordination is a presbyterial act, to be performed with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, and as elders are members of presbytery they have a right to join in that service. It will be admitted that the constitution is binding in the sense in which it was framed and adopted; and that it is unjust to enforce it in a different sense, even though the words themselves admit of the new construction. If a man in deeding an estate should define its limits inaccurately; if his intention could be clearly ascertained, it would be dishonest in any man, claiming under the deed, to take advantage of the phraseology, and say; There are the words, you must abide by them. The real question then is, Did those who framed and those who adopted our constitution, intend by the words referred to, to confer on ruling elders the right to join in the actual ordination of ministers? If they did not, then no righteous claim can be advanced under the clause in question.

That the words of the constitution do not demand this construction is clear to demonstration. In the Westminster Directory it is said, "The presbytery, or the ministers sent by them for ordination,* shall solemnly set him apart to the office and work of the ministry by laying their hands on him," &c. Yet the Directory repeatedly asserts that the imposition of hands in ordination belongs to "the preaching presbyters orderly associated." This Directory was the rule of discipline in our Church at least from 1729 to 1788, when the new constitution was adopted; and from this source the *usus loquendi* of our formularies has been principally derived. Who then can believe that a form of expression, which in that book has confessedly one meaning, must of necessity in ours have a different? According to all ordinary rules of inference, we should conclude that the same phrase was to be taken in the same sense, in two works so nearly related.

Again, it is not more certain that ordination is an act of the presbytery, than that admission to the privileges of the Church is an act of the session. Yet ruling elders, though members of the session, cannot actually introduce a man into the Church by baptism. In like manner, though members of the presbytery, they cannot actually ordain. In both cases their concurrence is necessary in deciding on the fitness of the candidate; but the executive act belongs to the ministry. These considerations, at least, prove that the language of the constitution does not demand the construction now put upon it. That it was not intended to be so construed is proved from two sources—the language of the book in the immediate context and in other places, and from the uniform practice of the Church. The constitution, speaking of the ordination of ministers, says: "The presiding minister shall, by prayer, and with the laying on the hands of the presbytery, according to the apostolic example, solemnly ordain him to the office of the gospel ministry." All the members of the presbytery, it is then directed, shall take him by the right hand, saying, in words to this purpose, "We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part of this ministry with us." Of the words here used, the terms minister and ministry have a fixed and uniform meaning in our standards. They always mean minister of the gospel and his office. They must therefore have that meaning here. The term *member* may be used either for any person having a right to sit in the body, or for one of its permanent constituent members. The expression "all the members" may mean either all without distinction, or all of a particular class. What the sense is the context must determine. When it is said that the synod

* As the Directory permitted ordination to be performed by a committee, it says, The presbytery, or the ministers sent for ordination, &c.

shall be opened with a sermon "by the moderator, or, in case of his absence, by some other member," "some member" can only mean "some member" competent to the duty, some preaching member. In like manner, when it said "all the members" shall take the newly ordained minister by the hand, it can only mean all the members who are authorized to say, Take part of this ministry with us; which no man but a minister can say.

What, however, we should think, ought to put all controversy on this subject out of the question, is the uniform practice of the Church. For when the question concerns the intention of the framers of a document, their uniform practice is decisive; because it is absolutely incredible that the framers of our constitution should deliberately intend to express one thing, and yet uniformly act as though they meant a different. We do not see how any man can believe that the authors of our Book, and the presbyteries in adopting it, should purpose to make an important change in the usage of the Church, yet in no case act upon that intention; that no historical evidence should exist of such a purpose; and that those who were active in drawing up the constitution should all say they had no such thought, and never heard of any body else having it. We do think such a thing never happened since the world began. Men can hardly intend a thing without knowing it. This mode of interpreting a constitution in opposition to the manifest intention of those who framed it, and of those whose adoption of it gave it force, must destroy it. The same argument on which so much stress is now laid, would prove that a ruling elder might be the moderator of any of our judicatures, and consequently open the session with a sermon. The book says: a member shall preach: elders are members: therefore, elders may preach.

We conclude by repeating that the mere imposition of hands by elders, in the case of the ordination of a minister, is a matter of no importance. If understood as a solemn manner of expressing their assent to his ordination, it would be not only harmless, but decorous. It is the principle on which the change is urged that gives the question weight. That principle is felt on both sides to be important; and it is important, because it must work a change in our whole system. If this change is to be made, it ought to be effected in the way prescribed for altering the constitution, and not by the introduction of a single measure, which unsettles everything and settles nothing.

§ 6. Whether Ruling Elders may join in the Imposition of Hands when Ministers are Ordained. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. v.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 116.]

The question was overtured to the Assembly of 1842, whether ruling elders had, under our constitution, the right to join in the imposition of hands in the ordination of ministers; and was decided by a unanimous vote in the negative. As this answer was given without debate and during the absence of some members who took an interest in the subject, a vote was taken to reconsider the subject; and it was then laid on the table and passed over with other items of unfinished business to the late Assembly, [1843]. In the meantime the Synod of Kentucky had decided in favor of this supposed right of elders, and a protest was entered by the minority against the decision. The Presbytery of West Lexington sent up an overture in the form of a resolution declaring it to be their judgment that, according to the constitution of our Church, ruling elders have the right to unite with preaching elders in laying on hands in the ordination of ministers. The committee submitted a resolution declaring that neither the constitution nor practice of our Church authorizes the ruling elders thus to participate in the act of ordaining ministers. This resolution became the topic of an extended discussion, and was finally adopted by the following vote: *yeas*, 138; *nays*, 9; *non liquet*, 1; *excused from voting*, 4. Of the *nays* one voted under instructions, his private judgment being in favour of the affirmative; and four were elders, so that the proportion of elders in favour of this new claim was not greater than that of ministers.

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The main argument, on the other side is, that the constitution declares that a presbytery consists of ministers and ruling elders; that ordination is the work of the presbytery; and therefore, as much the work of elders as of ministers. This, which is so much the most plausible, that it may be said to be the only argument in favour of the right in question, rests entirely on the meaning of the constitution. How is this to be determined? How do we proceed when we wish to ascertain the sense of a passage of Scripture? The thing to be done is to find out what idea, Paul or John in using certain language, meant to convey. If we can ascertain that, we have that sense of the words which we must admit to be the true one, and, in the case of a rule or precept, the

[*From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic, "*Ruling Elders;*" *Princeton Review*, 1843, p. 432.]

one which we are bound to obey. To ascertain the sense which an apostle meant to express, we ascertain in the first place the literal, etymological meaning of the words. In a multitude of cases, this is enough. Very often, however, the words in themselves will bear different interpretations; to determine which is the true one, we ascertain how the author uses the same language in other parts of his writings; how it was used by contemporary writers; how it was understood by those to whom it was addressed; how it is explained by the nature of the thing spoken of, by the design and connection of the passage in which the language occurs, and by other declarations relating to the same subject; and finally how the conduct of the sacred writers and of those whom they instructed, interprets the language in question. If they so acted as to show they understood the language in a certain way, that is the way in which we are bound to take it. Paul calls Christ a sacrifice; but in what sense? in the sense of a propitiation? or in the sense in which we are exhorted to offer ourselves as a sacrifice to God? The words in themselves will bear either interpretation; but as we find Paul uses the language in reference to Christ in many places in such a way that it can only have the former of these senses; as in all contemporary writers, this language was used to express the idea of a propitiation; as those to whom it was addressed universally understood it in that sense; as the effects ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ, such as pardon of sin, etc., show this sense of the term; as many declarations used in relation to the same subject admit of no other meaning; as the conduct of the apostles and their disciples in placing their hopes of acceptance with God, on the death of Christ, and in exhorting others to do the same, proves that they regarded it as a real propitiation, we are sure that this is the true sense of the language which they employ. We say that the constitution is to be interpreted by these same principles, and that we are bound to abide by the sense thus elicited. Let it be admitted that the words presbytery, member, and ministry, as used in our book, may in themselves admit of the interpretation put upon them by the advocates of the other side of this question, yet if this interpretation is inconsistent with other parts of the book; if it is inconsistent with the sense in which this language was used by contemporary writers; with the sense in which it was understood by those to whom it was addressed; if it is incompatible with the nature of the service spoken of, and the rights and duties of elders as elsewhere explained; and if it is inconsistent with the practice of those who framed the constitution and of those who adopted it, then we are perfectly sure that it is not the true meaning of that instrument. As to the first of these points, it is clear that a presbytery, in the sense of our book, is a body of ministers regularly convened, in which ruling elders have a

right to deliberate and vote as members; that the ministers are the standing, constituent members; the elders, members only as delegated, for a particular meeting, and for the special purpose of deliberating and voting. This is the idea of a presbytery on which our whole system is founded; and which runs through our whole constitution. An interpretation of any particular passage, inconsistent with this distinction, is inconsistent with the constitution. It is by virtue of this leading principle that the "presbytery" often means the body of ministers who are its standing members, without including the delegated, any more than the corresponding members who may happen to be present. Hence, too, the presbytery is said to do what its standing members do, in obedience to the vote of the body; and hence the word "member" is used only of ministers.

Again, the interpretation which makes the expression "the hands of the presbytery" include ruling elders, is inconsistent with the sense that language bears in all writings cotemporary with our standards, or of authority in Presbyterian Churches. Thus in the Westminster Directory, whence our formularies were derived, this language is admitted to mean the hands of the preaching presbyters, because it can there have no other meaning, since the Directory elsewhere teaches that the work of ordination belongs to ministers. It has the same sense in Stewart's Collections, a book still of authority in Scotland, as it was formerly with us; it has the same sense in all the publications of the age in which our Confession of Faith was formed, which are regarded as giving an authentic exposition of Presbyterian principles. This is the point to which Dr. Maclean principally directed his remarks; and which he demonstrated in the clearest manner by abundant references to the works in question. What would be thought of an interpretation of an expression in the writings of Paul, which was inconsistent with the sense the phrase had in every other book in the Bible?

Again, as the ministers and elders who adopted our constitution had been accustomed to understand the expression "hands of the presbytery" in the sense in which it is used in the Directory, under which they had so long acted, it is clear they must have understood it the same way, when that expression was transferred to the new constitution. And if it be a sound principle of interpretation that we must take the language of any document in the sense which it was designed to bear to those to whom it was addressed, then we are bound to take the constitution in the sense in which it was framed and adopted. That is its true sense; the sense in which it is obligatory on the Church.

Again, the new construction of the passage in question, is inconsistent with the nature of the subject spoken of, and with the doctrine elsewhere taught in our standards concerning the office of the ruling

elder. When it is said: God sits on a throne; or, This is my body, we know that the language is not to be taken literally, because the literal interpretation is inconsistent with the nature of the subject spoken of, and with what is elsewhere taught concerning God, and the Lord's Supper. So when it is said that the presbytery shall ordain, we know that the standing and not the delegated members are intended from the nature of the service. When it is said "some member" shall open the sessions of the judicatory with a sermon, the nature of the service, of necessity, limits the phrase to those members that are entitled to preach. So when ordination to the ministry is the subject, the language is of necessity confined to those members who are in the ministry; who can say to the newly ordained brother "we give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this ministry with us." The word ministry means ministry of the gospel, and in our standards it means nothing else. The language just quoted means and can only mean, "we recognize you as a fellow minister of the gospel." This act of recognition is from its nature confined to those who are in the ministry. Besides, as ordination is a solemn setting apart to a certain office, it belongs, according to the doctrine of all churches, except the Brownist, to those who are clothed with the office conferred, or one superior to it, and which includes it. If ordination were merely induction into the order of presbyters, from which some members by a subsequent process, were selected to preach, and others to rule, then the service might from its nature belong to all presbyters; but as beyond dispute ordination is an induction into a particular office, it cannot, according to our constitution, belong to any who do not hold that office. Ordination to the ministry is therefore as much a peculiar function of the ministry as preaching is. The construction of the constitution which would give ruling elders the right to join in the ordination of ministers, is no less inconsistent with what that constitution teaches of the nature of the office of ruling elder. Ordination is an act of executive power, which does not pertain to the ruling elder. They have the right to deliberate and judge, but the execution of the determinations of our judicatories belongs to the ministry. This argument was thus presented by Chancellor Johns:

"The constitution of our Church confers upon its officers three kinds of power—legislative, judicial and ministerial. The ruling elders are clothed by the constitution with the first two, legislative and judicial, and can carry with them nothing else, place them where you may. Look at your elder in the lowest court, the Church session. He sits here as a legislator and a judge. But the moment you have to execute the sentence which is passed in this court, it devolves on your minister as the executive. Trace the elder up to the presbytery or synod, there he appears as the representative of the Church, but only with legislative and judi-

cial power. When the constitution refers any act to this body, it requires that it be done in a constitutional manner, and by those possessing the requisite constitutional power. After the decree has been passed that a man shall be ordained, it follows that it must be done by those who are not defective in power. It is clear that the moment you decide that ordination is a ministerial or executive act, that moment you decide that it must be performed by those possessing ministerial or executive authority. The execution of the acts necessarily devolves on the competent parts of the body. A ministerial or executive act therefore can be performed only by ministers. Unless you make an elder a minister at once, I never can admit that he can perform an act belonging to the ministerial office. This distinction unlocks the whole difficulty. On this principle, the presbytery give the right hand of fellowship to a co-presbyter 'to take part of this ministry.' But ruling elders are not in the 'ministry,' and therefore even this act does not belong to them."

Mr. Breckinridge says a minister, *per se*, has no power to ordain, but only as a member of presbytery, and adds—

"The question comes to this, do ministers as such ordain, or is it as members of presbytery? If as the latter, and not as the former, then elders being equally members of the presbytery, share in the act, and in the executive power vested in the whole body."

If the whole matter depends on the question, whether ministers, as such, ordain, or only as members of presbytery, we think it may be soon settled. Mr. B. appears to think that ministers and Church courts get all their powers from the constitution; whereas the constitution is but the declaration of the powers which belong to ministers and judicatories, and the stipulations agreeably to which those who adopt it agree to exercise their respective functions. Suppose the constitution was out of existence, would ministers and courts have no power? Have not any number of ministers, no matter how or where convened, the right to ordain? Are not the ordinations by the ecclesiastical councils in New England valid, although such councils are not presbyteries within the definition of our book? An affirmative is the only answer that can be given to these questions; consequently, ordination is a ministerial act; it is performed by ministers as such, and not merely as members of presbytery. It is true, all the ministers of the Presbyterian Church have entered into a contract with each other not to exercise this right, except under certain circumstances, or on certain conditions. They have agreed not to ordain any man who does not understand Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; who has not studied theology with some approved minister, at least two years, who does not adopt our Confession of Faith and Form of Government. They have also agreed not to exercise this right, unless regularly convened after due notice, that all interested, and having a right to be present, may have

the opportunity. The reason of all this is obvious. These ministers are connected with others; every man whom they ordain, becomes a joint ruler and judge over all the others; the others, therefore, have a right to a voice in his ordination, that is, to a voice in deciding under what circumstances or on what conditions ordination may be administered. But this does not prove that the power to ordain comes from the constitution, or that it belongs to the ministers only when convened in what we call a presbytery. Any two or three ministers, and (according to Presbyterian doctrine, as we understand it,) any one minister has full right to ordain as Timothy or Titus had. Presbyterial ordination is ordination by a presbyter or presbyters, and not by a presbytery, in our technical sense of the term. This is surely the doctrine of the Scriptures, and the only doctrine on which we can hold up our heads in the presence of prelacy. It is the only ground on which we can admit the validity of ordination by a single prelate, or by an ecclesiastical council, or, in short, of any ordination but our own. If then, as Mr. Breckinridge says, the only question is whether ministers as such, ordain, we think that even he, on reflection, must admit that the right to ordain is inherent in the ministerial office, and does not arise from any provision of our constitution, or from the associations of ministers and elders in the form of a presbytery.

Again, the new interpretation given to the constitution is contradicted by the practice of its framers, and the uninterrupted usage of the Church. This consideration has been set aside as an argument from tradition. But no argument is more legitimate. No man can doubt that if we had authentic information how the apostles and their disciples acted in carrying out the commands of Christ, we should have the most satisfactory of all rules for the interpretation of those commands. Christ directed his disciples to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a memorial of him, and the conduct of the apostles and early Christians under that command, is the best possible proof of the perpetual obligation of the command. He directed them to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Holy Trinity; the conduct of the disciples, in baptizing whole households, is one of our best arguments in favour of infant baptism. Apostolic usage also is the main ground of our observance of the first day of the week as the weekly sabbath. The Protestant objection to the Roman doctrine of tradition is not that apostolic teaching and practice are of no authority, but that we have no authentic or satisfactory proof of what that teaching and practice were, except in the inspired Scriptures. If papists will produce undoubted proof that the apostles understood the commands of Christ, and especially their own commands in a certain way, we will admit that such is the true way. So if our opponents will produce satisfactory proof that the

framers of our constitution and those who adopted it, intended to express a certain idea by any of its provisions, we will admit that such is the true meaning of the instrument As to the case in hand there is no room for dispute. The framers of our constitution find a certain expression in the Westminster Directory, under which they had long acted, and where it had an undoubted meaning, they transfer that expression to the new constitution, and continue to act precisely as they did before, and the Church has continued to act in the same way ever since. If this does not fix the meaning of the constitution, nothing can do it. No man, as far as we know, doubts or can doubt that the expression "laying on of the hands of the presbytery" was intended to mean the hands of the ministers, the standing members of the presbytery, and that it has been so understood ever since. This being the case, we see not what shadow of proof there can be that such is not its meaning. Let it be remembered that while Presbyterians have ever contended for presbyterial ordination, they have always contended for *ministerial* ordination, and that no case of lay ordination, or of an ordination in which ruling elders participated, has been produced, or, as is believed, can be produced in the history of any Presbyterian Church. Surely it is rather late in the day to begin to teach the whole Presbyterian world what are the first principles of their own system.

We have used above the expression *lay ordination*, without intending to decide whether ruling elders are laymen or not. This is a mere question of the meaning of a word. If a layman is one who holds no office in the Church, then they are not laymen; and then, too, Dr. Lushington and other judges of the ecclesiastical courts in England are not laymen. But if a layman is a man who is not a clergyman, not a minister of the gospel, then they are laymen. The latter is certainly the common meaning of the word, which is used to designate those whose principal and characteristic business is secular, and not sacred or clerical.

Finally it was objected to the new doctrine that it was destructive of the office of ruling elder, by merging it into the ministry. The only satisfactory or constitutional ground on which the participation of elders in the ordination of ministers can be defended is, that they hold the same office, that they take part in the same ministry, or in short that elders are ministers. But this conclusion is subversive of the office of ruling elder and of our whole system. And *cui bono*, what good is to be attained, what evil cured by this new doctrine? It adds nothing to the dignity or usefulness of the elder's office. If it is a mere ceremony, it is not worth contending about; if it is a serious matter, it is so only because the principle on which the claim is made to rest seriously interferes with our ecclesiastical constitution.

§ 7. Significance of Laying on of Hands. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xiii., sec. iv.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 346.]

The Committee of Bills and Overtures reported an overture from the Presbytery of South Alabama on the subject of ordaining elders and deacons with the imposition of hands. The committee recommended that it be left to the discretion of each Church session to determine the mode of ordination in this respect.

Under the old dispensation and in the Apostolic Church, the imposition of hands was used on all solemn occasions to signify the idea of communication. It is a fitting and becoming ceremony whenever the rights and privileges of a sacred office are conferred; but there is evidently no necessity or peculiar importance to be attached to it. There would seem to be something of the leaven of the Popish doctrine of the communication of a mysterious influence, producing the indelible impress of orders, still lurking in the minds of some of our brethren. If grace, in the sense of divine influence, was given by the laying on of hands, then indeed, it would be a serious question when that ceremony should be used. But if grace, in such connection, means what it often means in Scripture, and in the language of the English Reformers, office, considered as a gift; then it is obviously a matter of indifference, whether those in authority express their purpose of conferring a certain office by words or signs, or by both.

§ 8. Installation not essential to Validity of Eldership. [†]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xiii., sec's. iii–v.—comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 347, 348.]

[Judicial.] Case no. 3. In this case it appears that the session of the Church of Muncy arraigned General ——— ——— on three charges. On two of these he was condemned; but on the first charge, the ruling elders of the Church being interested, the case was referred to the Presbytery of Northumberland, who tried and condemned him on the first charge. The Synod of Philadelphia afterwards, on the alleged grounds that one of the ruling elders had not been installed, and also that the session were interested personally in the case, declared the whole proceedings null and void. The Rev. Messrs. Waller and Gibson now complain of the said action of Synod; and Mr. Smalley appeals.

The only point of general interest involved in this case is, whether installation is essential to constitute a man a ruling elder in any con-

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1842, p. 483.]

[† From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1856, p. 586.]

gregation. The affirmative was strenuously asserted by several members of the Synod. The negative was as strongly affirmed by several members of the Assembly. Judge Leavitt stated, "that if installation were necessary, he himself was not a ruling elder, and had no right to a seat in the Assembly." Mr. Hendricks, of Indiana, made the same statement respecting his own position. "He had never heard, indeed, the word installation applied to ruling elders until yesterday." Similar statements were made by others. Mr. Waller stated that "there were five uninstalled ruling elders at his Presbytery last fall. Did that destroy the Presbytery?" The Assembly refused to sustain the appeal and complaint. The vote stood—sustain, 52: not sustain, 100; sustain in part, 14. This might seem to imply that the Assembly intended to sanction the doctrine of the necessity of installation. To avoid that inference, the Rev. Mr. Shotwell moved that a committee be appointed to bring in a minute expressing the judgment of the Assembly in the case. Dr. Humphrey "thought this important, inasmuch as the vote of the morning had placed many members in a very equivocal position. Are these men," he asked, "no longer ruling elders?" The motion was carried. The committee subsequently reported the following minute, which was adopted, viz.

The Committee appointed to prepare a minute in relation to the action of the Assembly in Judicial case No. 3, respectfully recommend the passage of the following resolutions, to prevent on the one hand the bad effects of former irregularities in the installation of ruling elders, and on the other hand to avoid such irregularities in future.

1. *Resolved*, That any ruling elder, regularly ordained or installed in one church, and subsequently elected to the sacred office in another church, and who has heretofore, pursuant to such election, served as a ruling elder in such other church, *without objection*, shall be presumed to have been duly installed therein, and his right to act shall not be now questioned.

2. *Resolved*, That when a ruling elder shall hereafter be elected to the same office in a church other than that in which he has been ordained, the minister and session are hereby enjoined formally to install him.

3. *Resolved*, That the Assembly hereby declare that the existing law of the Church as to the mode of installation is as follows:—After sermon, the minister shall speak of the office of ruling elders, as in case of ordination, and shall then propose to the ruling elder elect, in the presence of the congregation, the following questions: "Do you accept the office of ruling elder in this congregation, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?" "Do you promise to study the peace, unity, and purity of the Church?" The ruling elder elect having answered these questions in the affirmative, the minister shall ask the members of the church whether they accept him, as in cases of ordination. The members of the church having answered in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the minister shall declare him a ruling elder of the church; and accompany this act by an exhortation, prayer, and other proceedings, as he may deem suitable and expedient.

Turrettin remarks, that in reference to ordination and the appointment of church officers, we must distinguish between "essential, and accidentals." To make forms essential is the essence of formalistic ritualism, and utterly subversive of God's law, and of the best interests of the State and of the Church. What is marriage but the covenant between one man and one woman to live together as man and wife, according to God's ordinance? Wherever this covenant is made, there, in the sight of God, and *in fero conscientiæ*, is marriage. Different States have enacted different laws prescribing the forms or circumstances which should attend this contract and the modes in which it shall be attested; and it is the duty of all living under such laws to conform to them. But suppose that from ignorance or recklessness any of them are neglected, is the contract null and void? To answer in the affirmative is to trample the law of God under foot. For a long time the laws of England required that all marriages should be solemnized in church by an episcopally ordained minister, and within canonical hours. While these laws were in force, it was the duty of all Englishmen to obey them. But suppose any man was married by a Presbyterian minister, after twelve o'clock, noon, would his marriage in the sight of God be void, and would it be pronounced void by the civil courts, without doing violence to the divine law? In like manner, ordination is the declaration of the judgment of the Church, through its appointed agents, that a certain man is called to the ministry. The Church directs that this judgment shall be signified in a certain way, and with certain prescribed solemnities, such as laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Suppose any of these prescribed formalities are neglected; suppose the presbytery omit the laying on of hands, (as we have known very recently to be done,) is the ordination void? No man but a Papist or Puseyite would answer, Yes. In the case of a ruling elder, the choice of the church, and the consent of the person chosen, is all that is essential. The rest is ceremonial. Prescribed forms should be observed; the neglect of them should be censured. But to make them essential is, in our view, to abandon the fundamental principle of Protestantism and of common sense. It would invalidate the acts of half the sessions in the country.

This matter of installation of elders is very much a novelty. We believe it is unknown in the Scottish and Continental Churches. We have no objection to it. We are perfectly willing it should be "enjoined," and we think the injunction ought to be complied with; but we must renounce our Protestantism before we can believe that an uninstalled elder is no elder. Some years since, an Episcopalian in Ireland was married to a Presbyterian woman, the rite being solemnized by a Presbyterian minister, whereas the law at that time required that

when either party belonged to the Episcopal Church, the officiating clergyman should be an Episcopalian. The man repudiated his wife, and made her children bastards. In some of our States the law requires a marriage license. A young girl, ignorant of that fact, is married without a license, and her marriage is pronounced void. Is this right? Certainly it is, if the neglect of prescribed forms be allowed to vitiate solemn contracts. Mr. Waller asserted "that Mr. Smalley, the ruling elder in question, was unanimously elected, after due and sufficient notice," and was immediately invited to take his seat in the session, and did so. This was almost a month before the trial. Any principle which would invalidate his official acts would justify the repudiation of a wife under the circumstances just stated. If a man sells an estate, and receives the money for it, and then refuses to recognize it because of technical defect in the papers, it would be universally considered an outrage, because everything essential to a sale had been done, and the failure was in unessential and variable formalities. However, therefore, we may be disposed to insist on certain forms attending induction into Church offices, do not let us do as Romanists do, exalt forms into substance.

§ 9. The Right of Elders to exhort and to expound the Scriptures. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. v.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 117.]

Dr. Waddel said he desired to bring up a paper from the Tombeckbee Presbytery, which he had been requested by the delegate from that Presbytery to bring before the Assembly, as the delegate himself had failed to arrive. It could not legally come before the Assembly he knew, but might do so in an informal way, by consent of the Assembly. It was a request of the Presbytery to the Assembly to review its former deliverance on the subject of ruling elders conducting religious service and expounding the Scriptures.

Dr. Waddel moved that the paper be received by the Assembly. Dr. Adger seconded this resolution in order to offer an amendment to it, as follows: "Whereas, the last Assembly, near the close of its meetings, and probably therefore, with some degree of haste, in adopting the report of their Committee on the Records of the Synod of Mississippi, did sanction the principle that a ruling elder, in the absence of the pastor, may read the Scriptures and explain them, and endeavour to enforce the truth by suitable exhortations; and whereas the notice of this body has been called to the subject by representations on the part of a Presbytery of that Synod, therefore be it resolved by this Assembly, that explaining the Scriptures, and enforcing the truth by exhortation, form no part of the official duty of ruling

[* From Article on "*The General Assembly*," topic same, *Princeton Review*, 1857, p. 487.]

elders. At the same time it is earnestly recommended by this Assembly, in the language of the twenty-first chapter of our Form of Government, that every vacant congregation meet together, on the Lord's day, at one or more places, for the purposes of prayer, singing praises, and reading the Holy Scriptures, together with the works of such approved divines as the Presbytery in whose bounds they are may recommend, and they may be able to procure: and that the elders or deacons be the persons who shall preside, and select the portions of Scriptures and of the other books to be read, and to see that the whole be conducted in a becoming and orderly way."

* * * * * *

The decision of the Assembly is certainly in accordance with the usage of the Church in all parts of our country with which we are acquainted. In Dr. Green's congregation, in Philadelphia, the elders held weekly meetings in different parts of the city, in which they read the Scriptures and exhorted the people, explaining and applying the portion read. In the French Protestant Churches, where the same pastor serves several congregations, it is customary for him to set one of his elders to supply his place when he is engaged in some other part of his charge. Every head of a Christian family and almost every private member of the Church does more or less of the duty here enjoined. It is hard to see why the elders alone should be debarred the privilege. It would require very stringent laws, and more power than any Assembly possesses, to prevent zealous elders from exhorting sinners to repent and turn unto God and live.

§ 10. Relative Powers of Elders and Deacons. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. vi. *Digest* of 1873, p. 119.]

Dr. Breckinridge reported the following Overture. Has a Church session any control over the funds in the hands of the deacons for the poor of the Church? or does the control belong to the deacons? Or what power has the session in the premises? The first of these questions the Committee recommend should he answered in the negative; the second in the affirmative; and the third, by saying that the session may advise as to the use of the funds in the hands of the deacons.

This subject occasioned some little debate, perhaps from the fact that the limitations of the question were not at first perceived. The question was not, which was the governing power, deacons or elders? Nor which had the right to raise and to control the general contributions of the Church? Nor even which body had control over the contribu-

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic same, *Princeton Review*, 1857, p. 471.]

tions made specifically for the poor? But simply which had the right to determine on the distribution of money designed for the poor, and already in the hands of the deacons? That is, to decide who shall receive it, and how much should be given to A., and how much to B. The question was thus reduced to a very small point. As soon as the Assembly discovered this, they cut short the debate, and adopted the report of the committee.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRESBYTERY.

§ 1. Quorum of Presbytery.[*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. x., sec. vii.—*Digest* of 1873, pp. 139–144, 205, 551.]

In answer to a question proposed in Overture No. 20, the committee reported the following resolution:

Resolved, That any three ministers of a presbytery, being regularly convened, are a quorum competent to the transaction of all business, agreeably to the provision contained in the Form of Government, ch. x. § 7. This resolution was adopted, *yeas* 83, *nays* 35.

We have seen no report of the debate on this motion, but from the protest presented by Messrs. Breckinridge and Junkin, for themselves and twenty other members, we gather that the leading objections to the ground taken by the Assembly were substantially as follows: 1. It was said to be in opposition to the letter and spirit of the constitution, which declares a presbytery to consist of all the ministers and one ruling elder, from each congregation within a certain district. As a presbytery is said to consist of ministers and elders, these form its constituent elements; and the body cannot be formed of only one of its constituent elements. The section which says that three members regularly convened, and as many elders as may be present, constitute a quorum of presbytery, shows that at least one elder is indispensable in order to the regular organization of a presbytery.

2. In sec. 10 of ch. x. which provides for the calling of extra meetings of presbytery, it is required that at least two elders should join in the call for such a meeting, and that due notice should be given to the session of every vacant congregation. This was supposed to prove that the elders are an essential part of the presbytery, and that the constitution designed to guard against any assumption of power by the ministry, to the neglect or exclusion of the eldership.

3. The decision of the Assembly was declared to be opposed to principles essential to the nature and existence of Presbyterianism. It was represented as an essential element of Presbyterianism that God's people govern themselves, and manage their ecclesiastical affairs, in accordance with his word and by their own chosen and ordained representatives. The elders are declared to be the representatives of the people, to exercise discipline and government in connection

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic same; *Princeton Review*, 1843, p. 444.]

with the ministers. If this principle be destroyed the whole system is destroyed. Admit the principle that the ministry may, without the presence of any representatives of God's people, transact the business of the people, and you lay our glorious system of representative republicanism in ruins; and over those ruins you may easily pave a highway to prelacy and popery. As every act which a presbytery may perform, affects the interestsof the members of Christ's body, they are entitled to be represented; and it was wise in the framers of our constitution to provide that the people's business should never be done, unless the people had at least one representative to see to their interests, and to watch those encroachments of the ministerial order, which had resulted in one papacy and might lead to another.

4. The decision of the Assembly was uncalled for and tends to weaken the importance of the eldership, by representing that their presence in our presbyteries is not necessary and might be undesirable.

5. The impatience of the house prevented a full and fair discussion of the question; and the chief reasons urged in favour of the decision were drawn from extreme cases, not likely to occur, and which were injurious to the eldership as supposing they would be so negligent of their vows as with any frequency to absent themselves from our church courts.

Rev. Messrs. Breckinridge and J. Montgomery subjoined for themselves to this protest an expression of their opinion that the above decision appropriately, and of necessity flowed from the decision previously made, that the constitution does not authorize ruling elders to unite, by the imposition of hands, in the ordination of ministers. Against both of these decisions they desired to protest, striking, as they believed them to do, at the fundamental principles of the constitution.

To these protests the Assembly recorded an answer, with the help of which we construct the following brief reply. The protest seems to proceed on an erroneous idea of the nature of a presbytery; as though it were a creature of our constitution. A presbytery is a number of presbyters regularly convened. Their powers belong to their office; and they are clothed with that office by their ordination. A number of ministers episcopally ordained, might associate themselves together and form a presbytery, and would, according to the doctrine of Presbyterianism, have the right to ordain and to exercise all the powers of discipline and government over their own members, and over the congregations submitting to their watch and care, that belong to any presbytery in the world. It is, therefore, not necessary to the existence of a presbytery that ruling elders should constitute a portion of its members.

If the doctrine which lies at the basis of this protest is true, that ruling elders are "an essential element of a presbytery," indispensable to its nature and existence, then there was no such thing as a presbytery in the world for a long series of ages; then we must deny the validity of the orders, or at least of the early ordinations of all Protestant Churches, for it is certain that their ministers were not ordained by presbyteries of which ruling elders were members. There is nothing in the Scriptures or in our Confession that authorizes such a doctrine.

It may however be said that although ruling elders are not indispensable to the existence of a presbytery, yet under our constitution the presence of one or more ruling elders is necessary to the regular constitution and action of a presbytery in our Church. This is a very different point; yet it would appear that the great reason for the adoption of the particular construction of the constitution presented in the protest is to be found in the doctrine that ruling elders are essential to the existence of any presbytery. Apart from this preconceived idea of the nature of a presbytery, the constitution gives very little colour to the construction put upon it by the protest. When it is said that the presbytery "consists of all the ministers and one ruling elder from each congregation within a certain district," the constitution merely teaches of what materials a presbytery may be composed: it says nothing as to what is necessary to its regular constitution. It does not say that a presbytery must consist of all the ministers, or that there must be an elder from each congregation. It is very rare indeed that a presbytery in point of fact consists of all the ministers and all the elders who have a right to be present. Thus the General Assembly, it is said, *shall* consist of an equal delegation of bishops and elders from each presbytery. But who has ever seen such a General Assembly? These clauses, therefore, teach nothing as to what is necessary to form a presbytery competent to proceed to business. But does not the section which says that any three ministers and as many elders as may be present, &c., shall be a quorum, teach that the presence of at least one elder is necessary for that purpose? We do not think this construction would be put upon that clause by any who was not possessed with the idea that there can be no presbytery without ruling elders. If any number of ministers regularly convened is a presbytery, and if our book recognises the right of elders to sit and vote as members of presbytery, then we think the plain sense of the above clause is, That three is the smallest number of ministers that, in our Church, can act as a presbytery, and when regularly convened may proceed to business together with any elders who may be present. The ministers constitute the presbytery; they are the permanent members of the body; in that body each session has a right to be represented by one elder. This we consider the plain meaning of our book. Elders have a right to come, and it is very important they should come, but they are not compelled to come, nor is their presence necessary to the constitution of the body.

Had the framers of our constitution intended to introduce the novel idea that there could be no presbytery, without ruling elders, they would doubtless have said, Three ministers and at least one ruling elder, shall be necessary to form a quorum. But as they have not said

this, or anything equivalent to it, we have no reason to suppose they intended to lay down any such rule.

2. It is further argued that the decision is hostile to what is declared to be a principle essential to the very nature and existence of Presbyterianism, viz., that God's people should govern themselves, and manage their own ecclesiastical affairs, in accordance with his word and by their own chosen and ordained representatives. The first remark to be made on this argument is, that the decision protested against, has no special hostility to that principle. Ministers are just as much the representatives of the people as elders are. Both are chosen by the people to their stations in the Church; neither have any authority over any congregation, not voluntarily subject to their watch and care; and at the same time neither derives his authority from the people, nor is either responsible to them. Both classes stand, as far as this point is concerned, in precisely the same relation to the people; and a presbytery composed entirely of ministers, is no more hostile to the principle that "God's people govern themselves," than a presbytery composed entirely of ruling elders.

But, secondly, we demur to the principle itself. It is no part of our Presbyterianism that God's people govern themselves, any more than that a family governs itself. In other words, in the Christian Church, as in a Christian family, the power and authority of the rulers do not come from the people, but from Christ. He committed the power to teach and rule to certain officers; and directed them to communicate the same authority to others. All the power they have comes from him; the power goes with the commission, which is received in each case from the officers and not from the members of the Church. This is just as true in the case of ruling elders as of ministers. The authority to exercise the power inherent in their respective offices over any congregation depends on the will of that congregation, but not the power itself. If I am ordained a minister of the gospel, I have all the rights and privileges attached by Christ to that office; but I have no authority over any congregation that does not choose me as their pastor, or that does not voluntarily subject itself to the presbytery of which I am a member. Whether this is republicanism or not, we do not know, and are not careful to inquire, seeing we are persuaded it is the order which Christ has established in his own house for edification and not for destruction. We are persuaded also, that no man can show philosophically, that such power, or such a theory of the Church, is peculiarly liable to abuse; or historically, that it has ever led to any serious or lasting evils. As in the case of a family, the authority of the parent, derived from God, and independent of the will of the children, is in general restrained within proper bounds by natural affec-

tion; so in the Presbyterian Church the authority of its officers, though derived from Christ, is effectually restrained by two important limitations. The one is, that it neither extends over the conscience, nor is armed with any power to inflict civil pains or penalties. It is simply ministerial and spiritual. If Presbyterian ministers or elders inflict any censure contrary to God's word, it is, by their own doctrine, innoxious and nugatory. They pretend to no power, but to declare and execute the commands of Christ; and any man, who sees that their acts are not authorized by those commands, feels himself unhurt by any thing they can do to him. The other limitation is, that the submission of the people even to this ministerial and spiritual authority, is voluntary, enforced by no other than moral considerations, which submission is a matter of duty only when the rules of the word of God are adhered to. When we say that the subjection of the people to the legitimate authority of their spiritual rulers, is voluntary, we do not mean that they are under no moral obligation to unite themselves with the Church, and to submit to its discipline; but that this is a voluntary and rational subjection. It is free for them to decide with what Church they will connect themselves, and how long that connection shall continue, subject only to their responsibility to God. If the people wish more liberty than this they must go where the Bible is unknown. There is no tendency therefore in the decision of the Assembly to foster tyranny in the Church, or to introduce popery; and we presume the protesters themselves feel very little uneasiness on that point. They cannot but know that the source of priestly power is false doctrine. So long as the people have unimpeded access to Jesus Christ, and are not taught that it is only through the hands of their ministers, that they can obtain pardon and salvation, their liberties are secure. The truth makes and will ever keep men free.

3. The only other ground of protest is that the decision in question, tends to disparage the eldership and to discourage their attendance on our presbyteries. We cannot see the force of this objection. Does the clause declaring that only three ministers are required to form a quorum, tend to disparage the other members of the body, as though they were of so little account, that the presbytery can dispense with their attendance, and would be glad to have as few of them as possible? The complaint that the eldership are undervalued and denied their just influence in the Church, is one of the most unfounded that can be made. The influence of a man in our judicatories depends far more on his personal qualifications than on his station. It is not to be expected that a weak and ignorant man, be he elder or minister, can have the weight with his brethren which a man of talent and learning, whether minister or elder, possesses. The protestants must have observed

that there were elders on the floor of the last Assembly, who were listened to with a deference manifested towards few ministers, and whose judgments had a weight of which few clerical members of the house could boast. As far as we have observed, it is always the case, that, other things being equal, the influence of elders in our public bodies is greater than that of ministers. And what is much to their credit, they have sense enough to see and acknowledge it. These complaints of their being undervalued, are almost always from ministers; and are to the elders themselves matters of surprise and sometimes of amusement. The true influence of any set of men depends in a great measure in their acting in their appropriate sphere. The influence of the clergy is not to be increased, by their acting as laymen; nor that of laymen by their acting as clergymen. The value of the office of ruling elder, we hold to be inestimable; but it depends upon his being a ruling elder, with rights, duties, and privileges distinct from those of the minister; on his being, in the ordinary sense of the word, a layman and not a clergyman.

§ 2. Ordination by less than Three Ministers. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. x., sec. viii.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 145–149.]

The Rev. Mr. Hughes, of the committee on the Minutes of the Synod of West Tennessee, recommended that the Records be approved, with the exception, that the Synod sanctioned the action of the Holstein Presbytery in ordaining a licentiate, when but two ministers were present. The committee recommended that the Assembly express their strong disapprobation of this measure, and declare that the Synod should not have countenanced the proceedings of the Holstein Presbytery.

Mr. Walter Lowrie moved that the exception be stricken out from this Report.

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The Rev. Dr. Doak, (one of the fathers of Presbyterianism in the West,) remembered all the circumstances of this case. At that very session there was a quorum present, by whom all the trials and preliminary exercises were approved, and the candidate was actually on his knees, and the hands of the two ministers were on the candidate's head, when they discovered the third brother had absented himself. They consulted as to what should be done, and concluded that as everything else had been done in so orderly a manner, the want of a third minister's hand was not indispensable, and they therefore proceeded to ordain him. It seems hard that one single member of a presbytery should arrest the proceeding of a presbytery in such solemn circumstances, and before a large congregation. They ad-

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic, "*Ordination;*" *Princeton Review*, 1850, p. 477.]

mitted there was the appearance of wrong. He did not know whether the third brother had gone out of the house or not.

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Rev. Dr. Murray said, the question is a very simple one between irregularity and invalidity. The ordination here is irregular, as the Synod state; but they refuse to say that the ordination was invalid, and this the committee wish the Assembly to censure. He was persuaded the Assembly would not concur in this censure, and thereby pronounce this ordination invalid.

Rev. Dr. Rice. The Presbyterian Church is regulated by the Bible, as the great and highest resort, and the Confession of Faith as its exponent. Whilst the Confession of Faith requires three ministers in order to ordination, it no where declares that without three, there can be no ordination. Nor does the Bible any where specify "three" as the number necessary to ordain. It simply requires plurality. When we wish to determine what is regular, we go to our Form of Government; if to ascertain what is valid, we resort to the Bible. If two ministers are present, we cannot say that the Bible does not sanction the ordination. The number specified in our book is merely for prudential reasons.

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The exceptions in the report were stricken out, and the Synod was not censured for approving the conduct of the presbytery in this ordination.

In this decision we presume the great body of the Church will concur. As the brethren, whose remarks are quoted above, state, there is the greatest possible difference between irregular and invalid. Rules are laid down for security, and to be faithfully observed in ordinary circumstances. But the neglect or violation of the rules prescribing how a thing ought to be done, does not vitiate the thing done. In many countries and Churches there are rules regulating the celebration of marriage, but how monstrous would it be that the disregard of such municipal regulations should make the marriage void. That this is sometimes done, as in Great Britain, is justly regarded as a grievous injustice. Some years ago it was decided that a marriage in Ireland, solemnized by a Presbyterian minister, where one of the parties was an Episcopalian, was no marriage. It would be a decision of like, though of less enormity, to affirm that an ordination by less than three ministers was no ordination. * * * * We recognize the validity of orders in the Episcopal Church, and all classes of Presbyterians have always done so, with what consistency, then, can we maintain that three, or even a plurality of ordainers is absolutely necessary? A plurality may be desirable in all possible cases; the precise number, three, may be the safest minimum that could be fixed on as the general rule, but there is nothing in the nature of ordination, and nothing in the laws of Christ which makes that number essential. We have derived the rule from the old canon law, as laid down in the

earliest councils of the Christian Church, which required the co-operation of three bishops in the ordination or consecration of another bishop. This became the universal law of the Church, and of all Churches, and was from its obvious wisdom adopted by the different classes of Protestants at the Reformation. But it has ever been regarded as a prudential municipal arrangement, necessary to the safety of the Church, but not to the validity of the service. In our own Church the same principle has been acted on. In the early part of our history, it was customary to ordain by a committee of presbytery, as well as by the presbytery itself. The Rev. Dr. Leland indeed, is reported to have said, "Installation can be performed by a committee of two ministers, but the power of ordination cannot be delegated." If this means simply that under our present constitution such is the rule, it may be correct. But if, as we suppose was intended, the sentence quoted means that according to the principles of Presbyterianism "the power of ordination cannot be delegated," it is obviously contradicted by the practice of our own Church, by the express enactments of the Westminster Directory, and the history of the Church, in all its Presbyterian branches.

The fact that a single minister ordains elders not merely in the midst of his session, or parochial presbytery, but when acting as an evangelist and organizing churches, shows, at least to those who make ruling elders to be bishops, that according even to our present constitution a single bishop may ordain others to the episcopate. This, however, is not our argument. The real question is, what is ordination? and what is essential to the transmission of the ministerial office? All admit that under our constitution, which accords in this matter with the general law of the Church, three ministers should be present and co-operate in the ordination services. Any departure from this rule is an irregularity, to be justified only in cases of emergency. But the departure, even when not justifiable, is to be censured as disorderly, but not considered as rendering the ordination void.

§ 3. Presbytery judges the Qualifications of its Members. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. x., sec. viii.—*Digest* of 1873, pp. 150–161.]

The memorial presented to the Assembly by the members of the Pittsburg convention, in their individual capacity as ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church, was referred to Drs. Miller, Hoge, Edgar, Messrs. Elliot, Stonestreet, and Banks. This committee made

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic; "*The Pittsburg Memorial;*" *Princeton Review*, 1835, p. 461.]

a report consisting of a preamble and eleven resolutions. The first resolution asserts the right of every presbytery to be satisfied with the soundness and good character of those ministers who apply for admission into the presbytery, and, if they see cause, to examine them, although they have testimonials of good standing from some other presbytery.

This resolution was opposed on the following grounds:

1. That it was inconsistent with the unity of the Presbyterian Church. The radical principle of our system is, that the several congregations of believers constitute one Church in Christ; but this resolution declares that the Church is not one, that there is no uniform system of action and government in the Presbyterian Church. To allow the presbyteries to determine the terms of membership within their own bounds, is to create separate churches; it is to make ourselves Congregationalists, or independent Presbyterians. The constitution declares what are the qualifications for the ministry; and if any Presbytery enacts a different rule, (making, for example, the knowledge of German or Sanscrit necessary,) it puts itself, *quoad hoc*, out of the pale of the Presbyterian Church, and declares itself a different body In like manner, if any Church session should undertake to prescribe new terms of communion, it would violate the constitution. The qualifications for the ministry and terms of communion are prescribed in the constitution, and are uniform throughout the Church, and binding alike upon all the presbyteries and all the churches. These terms cannot be altered by individual presbyteries or sessions. If they can add to them, they can subtract from them; but to allow this, would be to declare that the presbyteries were without government in this essential particular. When the Cumberland Presbyterians undertook to dispense with some of the requisites prescribed in the Form of Government, they were justly separated from the Church.

2. It is inconsistent with the respect and confidence due from one presbytery to another. To subject a man, who has been declared qualified for the ministry by one presbytery, to an examination before another, is to say that we doubt the fidelity or competence of the body by which he was ordained. This is incompatible not only with proper confidence, but also with the rule that declares that the decisions of one court are to be received by another. It thus arrays the presbyteries against each other. One presbytery pronounces a man sound, another declares him to be unsound; this destroys the connection between the presbyteries; it is a complete ecclesiastical revolution, the destruction of Presbyterianism, and the establishment of independency.

3. The rule established by the resolution is unjust toward the applicant. He may have the confidence of the presbytery to which he belongs and their testimonials of his good standing, and yet be rejected by a presbytery where he is not known, and without any fair and adequate trial. This could not be done without injustice and injury. It is admitted, that if the presbytery has reasonable ground to doubt of the soundness or good character of the applicant, this is a sufficient reason for not receiving him, but not for examining him. His own presbytery should be informed of these reasons—but a body to which he does not belong, and to which he is not amenable, has no right to put him on his trial. The assumption of this right is not only unjust to the individual, but it produces a clashing

jurisdiction. A jurisdiction is assumed by one body, while that of a co-ordinate body still remains.

4. The resolution is inconsistent with the nature of ordination in our Church. A man is not ordained as a minister within the bounds of one presbytery, but within the whole Presbyterian Church. If qualified constitutionally for the bounds of one presbytery, he is equally qualified for all presbyteries. If one presbytery is to rejudge the judgment of another presbytery, with regard to a man's standing in the ministry, the idea of our belonging to one Presbyterian Church is all a farce.

5. This resolution being directly opposed to one passed by the last General Assembly, its passage would tend to destroy the authority of the Assembly. It would be better to have no court of final appeal, if its decisions are to be thus treated.

6. This question was to be decided upon by men who had prejudged the case, who stood pledged to decide in a certain way.

7. This resolution goes to create an *inquisitorial* court; it places a man before a court to purge himself from suspicion, and gives to a foreign presbytery a power which even a man's own presbytery does not possess.

8. It was argued that the resolution was inexpedient, because it could not accomplish the design contemplated by it, viz.: to keep out heresy. It would operate the other way. If an unsound presbytery should dismiss a man to a sound one, the latter would have him in their power, and could either reform him or cut him off. Thus they might catch one heretic after another, until the Church was purified. As to Church members, the case was the same. Suppose a member dismissed from one Church to join another; he comes with good testimonials, but is refused. What is he to do? Is he to go back into the world and be refused communion with the Church? If a good man, this would be monstrous; and if a bad one, he should be disciplined. We should "receive the greatest atheist on certificate, and rejoice in the opportunity of thus detecting and exposing a false professor of religion, and removing the scandal of his bad example."

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The resolution was supported by Dr. Hoge, Dr. Miller, Mr. Elliot, Mr. Winchester, and others. The arguments principally relied upon are the following:

1. That the right asserted in the resolution is the right of self-preservation, inherent in all bodies, and independent of all constitutions. It is, therefore, not a right derived from the constitution—not an acquired, but an original right. Unless there could be adduced decided evidence that this right had been voluntarily relinquished by the presbyteries, it must be assumed as still in existence. The *onus probandi*, therefore, was entirely on the other side. It should be remembered, that the presbyteries are the true fountain of all ecclesiastical power. They are independent bodies, except so far as they have chosen to unite with other presbyteries, and cede part of their original rights.

2. The right of judging of the qualifications of their own members, the presbyteries have never conceded. No express declaration of con-

cession is to be found in the constitution, nor is any such declaration pretended to exist. It is an argument of induction. It is attempted to be inferred from certain provisions of the constitution, that the right in question has been tacitly relinquished. But this method of reasoning on such a question is very unsatisfactory. The original powers and rights of contracting bodies should not be reasoned away; if they no longer exist, clear evidence of their having been knowingly and voluntarily relinquished, must be produced. It had been argued, that because the Church is *one*, therefore the several parts or separate presbyteries have no right to judge in this matter for themselves. This argument, however is invalid, because their union is by compact, and cannot be pressed beyond the terms of that compact. The presbyteries and churches are one, for the purposes and to the extent declared in the constitution, and no farther. To insist that the union was such as to destroy the separate existence and unconceded rights of the constituent parts of the body, is to maintain that the Church is consolidated, and to establish a complete spiritual despotism.

That no such union really exists between the several parts of the Presbyterian Church, is plain, because a member of one presbytery or congregation does not become *ipso facto* a member of every co-ordinate body. His admission into one of these associations gives him no rights in others of the same kind, until these rights are voluntarily conceded to him. Accordingly, the member of one presbytery or church never *demands* admission into another; he *asks* it; and the question whether his request shall be granted is put to vote. This is a clear recognition of the right asserted in the resolution, for the right of voting on the question of admission is the right of deciding it; it is the right of saying *No* as well as *Yes*. It is true, that the presbyteries have agreed on certain qualifications, which they have promised to require for admission into the ministry and into Church membership; and these terms of admission no individual presbytery or church has any right to alter. Should any presbytery, therefore, require the knowledge of Sanscrit, or dispense with the knowledge of Hebrew (?!) in its ministerial members, it would be a violation of the compact. And in like manner it would be unconstitutional to make the mere repetition of the Lord's prayer the test of fitness for Church membership. It is also true, that the decision of one Church court that the qualifications required by the constitution are, in any given case, possessed by any individual, should be respected in all other courts. Clean papers, or regular testimonials, therefore, are, it is readily admitted *prima facie* evidence of good standing, but they are not conclusive evidence. They are not such evidence as cannot be questioned or refuted. They are only a declaration on the part of the body that granted them, that in their judgment, and to the best of their

knowledge, the person to whom they are granted has the constitutional qualifications for a member of presbytery, or for a member of a church. But the body to which the application is presented may know better; it may have good reason for doubting the correctness of the judgment of the other court, and it certainly has the right to have those doubts solved. It is out of the question to maintain, that because one Church session thinks a man a Christian and fit to be received into the Church, all other sessions are bound to think so too, whatever evidence they may have to the contrary.

3. The right in question has always been asserted and exercised by our presbyteries and churches. The case of the Rev. Mr. Birch, [*] a foreign minister, is generally remembered. He applied for admission to one of the western presbyteries. They, not being satisfied that he possessed the constitutional qualifications, refused to receive him. He complained to the Assembly, and the Assembly examined him, and declared themselves satisfied. They did not, however, order the western presbytery to receive this gentleman, but simply authorized any presbytery that saw fit to admit him as a member. He was received by the Presbytery of Baltimore, and although he continued to reside in the west, he retained his connection with that presbytery. It was never thought or pretended that because the Presbytery of Baltimore was satisfied, therefore other presbyteries must be; and Mr. Birch did not dream that he had a right, on the ground of a dismission from the former body, to demand admission into every other. The General Assembly has distinctly recognized the right in question. In answer to an overture from the Presbytery of Baltimore, the Assembly declared, "It is a privilege of every presbytery to judge of the character and situation of those who apply to be admitted into their own body, and, unless they are satisfied, to decline receiving the same. A presbytery, it is true, may make an improper use of this privilege; in which case the rejected applicant may appeal to the synod or General Assembly." Minutes, vol. v., p. 265. [†] Even in the last Assembly, the resolution, as introduced by the chairman (Mr. Leach) of the committee on the Cincinnati memorial, contained an explicit recognition of this right, though he readily accepted of the amendment by which it was stricken out. The member from the Presbytery of Londonderry, in moving that this resolution be sent down to the presbyteries, said, "I am in favor of the principle of the resolution. I have been astonished at the remarks which have been made on the subject, because I always supposed it was competent for the presbyteries to examine, if

[* See *Digest* of 1873, pp. 151, 549, 550.]

[† See *Digest* of 1873, pp. 151, 152.]

they thought proper. The old original presbytery which I represent has always acted on this principle." In fact, this seems to have been universally admitted until very recently, when it was called in question in a particular case, which led to its reference to the General Assembly. The right to judge of the qualifications of their own members has been claimed and exercised with equal uniformity by the churches. When members from other churches have applied to be admitted on certificate, they have always felt competent to refuse to receive them if they saw cause.

4. It was argued, that the right recognized in the resolution could not be safely relinquished. It is the great conservative principle of Presbyterianism. Its denial would subject the whole Church to the domination of any one of its parts, and be attended with incalculable evils. A presbytery might refuse to ordain an individual on grounds perfectly satisfactory to them, and he might apply to another presbytery, and after having received ordination return with clean papers to the former body, and they be bound to receive a man whom they conscientiously believed to be unfit for the ministry. The right to discipline such members gives no adequate remedy for this evil; for a minister can only be disciplined for *offences*. Yet there may be abundant and solid reasons, other than indictable offences, for not receiving a man into the ministry. The denial of the right in question would subject all the presbyteries and churches in the country to the judgment, or even want of fidelity, of any one church or presbytery. Even where the ground of objection to an applicant is, in the judgment of a church or presbytery, serious enough to be the ground for a charge and trial, it is put beyond their cognizance by the act of receiving him as in good standing with the knowledge of this ground of objection. This is a bondage to which the presbyteries and churches cannot be expected to submit. One church thinks that slave-holding, slave-dealing, the use and manufacture of ardent spirits, are consistent with a credible profession of Christianity; are those churches which think differently to be bound to receive members on certificate from such a congregation? There have been, and perhaps are, Presbyterian churches in which members are admitted to the communion without any examination as to their knowledge or religious experience. Are all other churches bound to receive such members? Would a southern presbytery be bound to receive an abolitionist who felt it to be his duty to speak and preach on the subject of slavery as many ministers speak and preach in the north? Would it not be competent for a presbytery to say to such applicant, you may be a very good and proper man for the north, but here you would do more harm than good?

5. It has been said that the resolution recognizes the existence of two conflicting jurisdictions, and makes a man subject to two presbyteries at the same time. This is denied, because both presbyteries have not the right to arraign, and try, and punish him. He is subject to his own presbytery alone; but if he voluntarily asks admission into another, it is the privilege and duty of that other to be satisfied that he has the constitutional qualifications, and that his admission would be for the edification of their churches. The refusal to admit deprives the applicant of no right, it subjects him to no censure, it derogates in no degree from his ministerial standing. It is a simple declaration on the part of the refusing body that the reception of the applicant is inexpedient. It is true, reasons may be assigned for this refusal which implicate the character of the applicant. If these reasons are wantonly assigned it is a just ground of complaint, and should call down the censure of the higher courts on the presbytery or church which thus assigns them. But that a power may be abused is no evidence against its existence.

6. It had been said, that the passage of this resolution contradicting the decision of the last Assembly, must tend to degrade this body and weaken its authority. This is a consideration, however, which should have operated on the last Assembly, as their vote on this subject is inconsistent with the express declaration of previous Assemblies, and with the practice of the churches. When a wrong has been done, the sooner right is done the better and safer for all parties.

7. It had been said that part of the Assembly was already pledged on this subject. But can this interfere with their right to consider and vote upon the question? Are not some pledged against as well as others for the resolution? Was it ever known, in a deliberative body, that a man's having spoken or written in favour of any measure, or his having signed a petition or memorial in relation to it, disqualified him from considering it? Such a principle would throw out the majority of both sides of every such deliberative body on all subjects of general interest.

8. Finally, Whatever may be the difficulties connected with this subject, the question must be decided. The Church cannot be kept together unless the rights of presbyteries and churches in this matter be acknowledged. The Assembly must go back to simple Presbyterianism, both in regard to doctrine and practice. There is no way of saving the Church from disruption but to revert to first principles, and to cast away fanciful desires of improvement, all harsh deductions, all arraying of parties against each other. If we could come to this, the Presbyterian Church would soon become a united body.

The resolution was adopted. Yeas 129—Nays 79.

§ 4. Length of Study before Ordination. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xiv., sec. vi.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 399.]

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The Directors of the Western Theological Seminary requested that the General Assembly take measures to prevent, in ordinary cases, the licensure of candidates until the completion of the full course, as prescribed by the General Assembly.

"The Committee recommend, in view of the great importance of a thorough course of theological study, that the Presbyteries exercise great care and prudence in regard to the licensing of candidates, and that, in ordinary cases, this be postponed until the completion of the theological course, that their undivided attention may be given to the prosecution of their studies while in the Seminary." The recommendation was adopted.

This matter rests with the presbyteries, and we fear that this recommendation of the Assembly will not prove more effectual than others of a similar character. They are too much disposed to yield to the amiable desire to gratify the wishes of impatient young men who are importunate for licensure. There are cases, undoubtedly, in which good reasons exist for the licensure of candidates before the completion of their theological studies. But in the great majority of cases it is a great evil to the young men, to the institutions with which they are connected and to the Church. As a general rule, it is the more superficial, the less serious, and the less prepared class of candidates who are so desirous to assume the responsibilities of preachers. As soon as such men obtain licensure, they cease to be faithful students. Their time is largely devoted to preparing sermons, and their minds intent on seeking settlements. We have known young men to obtain licensure and receive calls before they had even commenced the study of theology proper. We hope the presbyteries may be induced to pay some respect to the repeated expression of the judgment of the Assembly on this subject. With them, however, rests the responsibility, for they have the constitutional right to license any young man, a member of the church, who has been nominally engaged two years in the study of theology, although those years may have been almost exclusively devoted to Church history and Hebrew.

§ 5. Ordination "Sine Titulo."[†]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xv., sec. xv.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 146, 413–415.]

The committee appointed on this subject [*Hasty Ordination and Un-*

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1863, p. 493.]

[† From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1842, p. 417.]

authorized Demission of the Ministry,] by the last Assembly made a report, which gave rise to a considerable discussion, but was finally as amended unanimously adopted.

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The principal points embraced in the discussion were the following: First, when may a candidate for the ministry be properly ordained *sine titulo?* On the one hand it was contended that such ordinations should never be allowed, unless the candidate intended to make the preaching of the gospel his main work, and to go as an evangelist to frontier or destitute places. But on the other hand, it was said that this principle did not embrace certain cases in which presbyteries had the right and ought to exercise the power to ordain. If the candidate had, in the judgment of the presbytery, a clear call of God to the ministry, and a proper field to exercise its functions, then he had a right to ordination, and it was the presbytery's duty to grant it.

Ordination confers the right and imposes the duty of preaching the gospel and of administering the sacraments; but it does not necessarily imply that the discharge of these duties should constitute the main business of the minister. There are many of our missionaries whose time and attention are mainly devoted to the superintendence of schools, or the translation of the Scriptures. Such men were Carey, Morrison, Martyn. While thus employed, however, they had abundant opportunities of preaching the Word. Was this right to be denied them, to satisfy the whim of adhering to rule? Our constitution declares that "the pastoral office is the first in the Church, both for dignity and usefulness." This we have no disposition to dispute; but the Church may see fit to assign some of her probationers to the more humble office of teaching her candidates the a b c of the sacred languages, of superintending their general or professional education; and while this is their main, official business, they may have abundant opportunities to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. Is there any reason why they should be deprived of this privilege, or shut out of this field of usefulness? We know professors in our colleges who preach every Sabbath, who attend Bible classes among the students, who have religious meetings every day in the week, often for months together. We know on the other hand, pastors, who, from necessity or choice, are six days in the week engaged in their schools, upon their plantations, or in some other secular or semi-secular employment, and who preach on the Sabbath one or two discourses. Is there any ground for regarding these latter as more in the way of their duty than the former? Has the one class any right to say to the other, Stand by, I am holier than thou?

We know no class of men worthier of more respect than pastors

whose congregations are unable or unwilling to give them an adequate support, and who, therefore, after the example of Paul, labour with their own hands night and day, that they may be able to preach the gospel of the grace of God. But it cannot be denied that what is at first undertaken as a means of support, is often prosecuted as a means of wealth, and that the richest ministers are often those who get the smallest salaries. All we wish is that justice should be done; that some of the best and most devoted men in the Church, whom the providence of God and the wishes of their brethren have placed in the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water, who are engaged in our colleges in preparing the children of the Church for the sacred ministry, should not be regarded as themselves intruders into that office, while, in point of fact, their time and strength are devoted to the service of the Church.

§ 6. Reordination. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. x., sec. viii.—*Digest* of 1873, pp. 147, 148.]

Overture No. 19 was also submitted, which propounds the following question: Is it the duty of Presbyteries, when elders or deacons from the Methodist Episcopal Church apply to become ministers of our Church, to recognize their ordination as sufficient, or to ordain them, as in the case of other candidates? The committee recommended that this query be answered by reference to the action of the General Assembly on this subject in 1821. This action is to this effect: It is the practice of the Presbyterian Church to regard the ordination of all Protestant Churches as valid. Re-ordination is not, therefore, required; but the same *qualifications* are expected as are demanded of all other candidates. Adopted.

This is a very pithy paragraph, and might be made the text for a long discourse on ecclesiology. It involves the questions, What is ordination? Who has the right to ordain? What is essential to the validity of orders? When is re-ordination proper, and when is it schismatical? To answer these questions satisfactorily would require more time, logic, and research than some of our brethren seem to think the whole department of Church government calls for. We heartily agree with the decision above quoted, and wish the far-reaching principles it involves were fully comprehended. We are persuaded many would feel their Presbyterianism undergoing a most healthful expansion, as these principles exert their appropriate influence.

* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1852, p. 497.]

§ 7. Adoption of the Confession of Faith.

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xv., sec. xii.—*Digest* of 1873, pp. 54, 57, 411.]

a. In Reply to Certain Strictures. [*]

Circumstances have recently awakened public attention to this important subject. It is one on which a marked diversity of opinion exists between the two portions into which our Church has been divided: and as in May last a direct proposition was made on the part of one branch of the New School body to our General Assembly for a union between them and the Old School, this original point of difference was brought into view. Not only on the floor of the Assembly was this matter referred to, but it has since been the subject of discussion in the public papers, especially at the South. A passing remark made in the last number of this journal, [†] which we supposed expressed a truth which no man could misunderstand or deny, has given rise to strictures which very clearly prove that great obscurity, in many minds, still overhangs the subject. We either differ very much among ourselves, or we have not yet learned to express our meaning in the same terms. It is high time, therefore, that the question should be renewedly discussed. We have nothing new to say on the subject. As long ago as October, 1831, we expressed the views which we still hold, and which in a passing sentence were indicated in our number for July last. Those views have passed unanswered and unheeded, so far as we know, for thirty-six years. How is it that the renewed assertion of them has now called forth almost universal condemnation from the Old School press? They have been censured by men who adopt them, and who in private do not hesitate to admit their correctness. This does not imply any unfairness, or any other form of moral obliquity. It is easily accounted for. The proposition, that the adoption of the Confession of Faith does not imply the adoption of every proposition contained in that Confession, might mean much or little. It might be adopted by the most conservative, and is all that the most radical need claim. Still the proposition is undeniably correct. The fault of the writer, as the *Presbyterian of the West* sensibly remarked, is not in what is said, but in what was left unsaid. This fault would have been a very grave one had the subject of subscription to the Confession been under discussion, and had the above proposition been put forth as the whole rule in regard to it. The remark, however, was merely incidental and illustrative. To show the impossibility of our agreeing on

[*An article entitled "*Adoption of the Confession of Faith*," *Princeton Review*, 1858, p. 669.]

[† For the criticism referred to, see *Church Commentary on the Bible;* p. 380 of this volume.]

a commentary on the whole Bible, we referred to the fact that there are propositions in the Confession of Faith in which we are not agreed. Does any man deny this? If not, where is the harm of saying it? Are we living in a false show? Are we pretending to adopt a principle of subscription, which in fact we neither act on for ourselves, nor dream of enforcing on others? Or are we so little certain of our own ground that we are afraid that our enemies will take advantage of us, and proclaim aloud that we have come over to them? If we really understand ourselves, and are satisfied of the soundness of our principles, the more out-spoken we are the better; better for our own self-respect, and for the respect and confidence of others towards us. If the Christian public, and especially those who have gone out from us, hear us asserting a principle or rule of subscription which they know we do not adopt, it will be hard for them to believe both in our intelligence and sincerity.

The question put to every candidate for ordination in our Church, is in these words: "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?" It is plain that a very serious responsibility before God and man is assumed by those who return an affirmative answer to that question. It is something more than ordinary falsehood, if our inward convictions do not correspond with a profession made in presence of the Church, and as the condition of our receiving authority to preach the Gospel. In such a case we lie not only unto man, but unto God; because such professions are of the nature of a vow, that is, a promise or profession made to God.

It is no less plain that the candidate has no right to put his own sense upon the words propounded to him. He has no right to select from all possible meanings which the words may bear, that particular sense which suits his purpose, or which, he thinks, will save his conscience. It is well known that this course has been openly advocated, not only by the Jesuits, but by men of this generation, in this country and in Europe. The "chemistry of thought," it is said, can make all creeds alike. Men have boasted that they could sign any creed. To a man in a balloon the earth appears a plane, all inequalities on its surface being lost in the distance. And here is a philosophic elevation from which all forms of human belief look alike. They are sublimed into general formulas, which include them all and distinguish none. Professor Newman, just before his open apostasy, published a tract in which he defended his right to be in the English Church while holding the doctrines of the Church of Rome. He claimed for himself and others the privilege of signing the Thirty-nine articles in a "non-natural sense;" that is, in the sense which he chose to put upon the words.

This shocks the common sense and the common honesty of men. There is no need to argue the matter. The turpitude of such a principle is much more clearly seen intuitively than discursively. The two principles which, by the common consent of all honest men, determine the interpretation of oaths and professions of faith, are, first, the plain, historical meaning of the words; and secondly, the *animus imponentis*, that is, the intention of the party imposing the oath or requiring the profession. The words, therefore, "system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures," are to be taken in their plain, historical sense. A man is not at liberty to understand the words "Holy Scriptures," to mean all books written by holy men, because although that interpretation might consist with the signification of the words, it is inconsistent with the historical meaning of the phrase. Nor can he understand them, as they would be understood by Romanists, as including the Apocrypha, because the words being used by a Protestant Church, must be taken in a Protestant sense. Neither can the candidate say, that he means by "system of doctrine" Christianity as opposed to Mohammedanism, or Protestantism, as opposed to Romanism, or evangelical Christianity, as distinguished from the theology of the Reformed (*i. e.* Calvinistic) Churches, because the words being used by a Reformed Church, must be understood in the sense which that Church is known to attach to them. If a man professes to receive the doctrine of the Trinity, the word must be taken in its Christian sense, the candidate cannot substitute for that sense the Sabellian idea of a modal Trinity, nor the philosophical trichotomy of Pantheism. And so of all other expressions which have a fixed historical meaning. Again, by the *animus imponentis* in the case contemplated, is to be understood not the mind or intention of the ordaining bishop in the Episcopal Church, or of the ordaining presbytery in the Presbyterian Church. It is the mind or intention of the Church, of which the bishop or the presbytery is the organ or agent. Should a Romanizing bishop in the Church of England give "a non-natural" sense to the Thirty-nine articles, that would not acquit the priest, who should sign them in that sense, of the crime of moral perjury; or should a presbytery give an entirely erroneous interpretation to the Westminster Confession, that would not justify a candidate for ordination in adopting it in that sense. The Confession must be adopted in the sense of the Church, into the service of which the minister, in virtue of that adoption, is received. These are simple principles of honesty, and we presume they are universally admitted, at least so far as our Church is concerned.

The question however is, What is the true sense of the phrase, "system of doctrine," in our ordination service? or, What does the Church

understand the candidate to profess, when he says that he "receives and adopts the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures"? There are three different answers given to that question. First, it is said by some, that in adopting the "system of doctrine," the candidate is understood to adopt it, not in the form or manner in which it is presented in the Confession, but only for "substance of doctrine." The obvious objections to this view of the subject are:

1. That such is not the meaning of the words employed. The two expressions or declarations, "I adopt the system of doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith," and, "I adopt that system for substance of doctrine," are not identical. The one therefore cannot be substituted for the other. If there were no other difference between them, it is enough that the one is definite and univocal, the other is both vague and equivocal. The latter expression may have two very different meanings. By substance of doctrine may be meant the substantial doctrines of the Confession; that is, those doctrines which give character to it as a distinctive confession of faith, and which therefore constitute the system of belief therein contained. Or it may mean the substance of the several doctrines taught in the Confession, as distinguished from the form in which they are therein presented. It will be at once perceived that these are very different things. The substance or essence of a system of doctrines is the system itself. In this case, the essence of a thing is the whole thing. The essential doctrines of Pelagianism are Pelagianism, and the essential doctrines of Calvinism are Calvinism. But the substance of a doctrine is not the doctrine, any more than the substance of a man is the man. A man is a given substance in a specific form; and a doctrine is a given truth in a particular form. The substantial truth, included in the doctrine of original sin, is that human nature is deteriorated by the apostasy of Adam. The different forms in which this general truth is presented, make all the difference, as to this point, between Pelagianism, Augustinianism, Romanism, and Arminianism. It is impossible, therefore, in matters of doctrine, to separate the substance from the form. The form is essential to the doctrine, as much as the form of a statue is essential to the statue. In adopting a system of doctrines, therefore, the candidate adopts a series of doctrines in the specific form in which they are presented in that system. To say that he adopts the substance of those doctrines, leaves it entirely uncertain what he adopts. The first objection then to this view of the meaning of the phrase, "system of doctrine," is, that it is contrary to the simple historical sense of the terms. What a man professes to adopt is, "the system of doctrine," not the substance of the doctrines embraced in that system.

2. Another objection is, that it is contrary to the mind of the Church. The Church, in demanding the adoption of the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, demands something more than the adoption of what the candidate may choose to consider the substance of those doctrines. This is plain from the words used, which, as we have seen, in their plain import, mean something more, and something more specific and intelligible than the phrase "substance of doctrine." The mind of the Church on this point is rendered clear beyond dispute by her repeated official declarations on the subject. The famous adopting act of the original Synod, passed in 1729, is in these words: "Although the Synod do not claim or pretend to any authority of imposing our faith on other men's consciences, but do profess our just dissatisfaction with, and abhorrence of such impositions, and do utterly disclaim all legislative power and authority in the Church, being willing to receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God, and admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances, all such as we have grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of heaven, yet we are undoubtedly obliged to take care that the faith once delivered to the saints be kept pure and uncorrupt among us, and so handed down to our posterity; and do therefore agree that all ministers of this Synod, or that shall hereafter be admitted into this Synod, shall declare their agreement in, and approbation of the Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as being, in all the essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine, and do also adopt the said Confession and Catechisms as the confession of our faith. And we do also agree, that all Presbyteries within our bounds shall always take care not to admit any candidate of the ministry into the exercise of the sacred functions, but what declares his agreement in opinion with all the essential and necessary articles of said Confession, either by subscribing the said Confession and Catechisms, or by a verbal declaration of their assent thereto, as such minister or candidate shall think best. And in case any minister of this Synod, or any candidate for the ministry, shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said Confession or Catechisms, he shall at the time of making said declaration, declare his sentiments to the Presbytery or Synod, who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government. But if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge such ministers or candidates erroneous in essential and necessary articles of faith, the Synod or Presby-

tery shall declare them incapable of communion with them. And the Synod do solemnly agree that none of them will traduce or use any opprobrious terms of those who differ from us in extra-essential and not necessary points of doctrine, but treat them with the same friendship, kindness, and brotherly love, as if they did not differ in such sentiment."

On the afternoon of the day on which the above act was adopted, the following minute was recorded, viz. "All the ministers of this Synod now present, except one,* that declared himself not prepared, namely, Masters Jedediah Andrews, Thomas Craighead, John Thompson, James Anderson, John Pierson, Samuel Gelston, Joseph Houston, Gilbert Tenant, Adam Boyd, John Bradner, Alexander Hutchinson, Thomas Evans, Hugh Stevenson, William Tenant, Hugh Conn, George Gillespie, and John Wilson, after proposing all the scruples that any of them had to make against any articles and expressions in the Confession of Faith, and Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, have unanimously agreed in the solution of those scruples, and in declaring the said Confession and Catechisms to be the confession of their faith, excepting only some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters, concerning which clauses the Synod do unanimously declare, that they do not receive those articles in such sense, as to suppose that the civil magistrate hath a controlling power over Synods, with respect to the exercise of their ministerial authority, or power to persecute any for their religion, or in any sense contrary to the Protestant succession to the throne of Great Britain.

"The Synod observing that unanimity, peace, and unity, which appeared in all their consultations relating to the affair of the Confession, did unanimously agree in giving thanks to God in solemn prayer and praises."

This fundamental act, passed in 1729, has never been either repealed or altered. It has on several occasions been interpreted and reaffirmed, but it has never been abrogated, except so far as it was merged in the readoption of the Confession and Catechisms at the formation of our present Constitution, in the year 1788. This important document teaches, first: That in our Church the terms of Christian communion are competent knowledge, and a creditable profession of faith and repentance. The Synod, say they, "admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances, all such as we have grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of heaven." Second: That the condition of ministerial communion is the adoption of the system of doctrine contained in the

* The Rev. Mr. Elmer, who gave in his adhesion at the following meeting of the Synod.

Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. This is expressed by saying, "We adopt the said Confession and Catechisms as the confession of our faith." For this is substituted as an equivalent form of expression, "agreement in opinion with all the essential and necessary articles of said Confession." That is, "all the essential and necessary articles" of the system of doctrine contained in the Confession. Third: That the only exceptions allowed to be taken were such as related to matters outside that system of doctrine, and the rejection of which left the system in its integrity. That this is the true meaning and intent of the act is plain, first, because the Synod in 1730 expressly declared, "that they understand those clauses that respect the admission of entrants or candidates, in such sense as to oblige them to receive and adopt the Confession and Catechisms at their admission, in the same manner, and as fully as the members of the Synod did, that were then present. Those members adopted the whole system in its integrity, excepting only to certain clauses relating to the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. Again, in 1736, they say, "The Synod have adopted, and still do adhere to the Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and Directory, without the least variation or alteration . . . . and they further declare, that this was our meaning and true intent in our first adopting of said Confession." In the same minute they say, "We hope and desire that this our Synodical declaration and explication may satisfy all our people, as to our firm attachment to our good old received doctrines contained in said Confession, without the least variation or alteration." This minute was adopted *nemine contradicente.** Second: Not only this official and authoritative exposition of the "adopting act," given by its authors, but the subsequent declarations of the several presbyteries composing the Synod, and of the Synod itself, prove that "the system of doctrines" was adopted, and not merely the substance of those doctrines. The common form of adoption may be learned from such records as the following, from the Presbytery of Philadelphia. Mr. Samuel Blair was licensed after "having given his assent to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as the confession of his faith." David Cowell was ordained "after he had adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as the confession of his faith." In 1741, the great schism occurred by the exclusion of the New Brunswick Presbytery, which being subsequently joined by the Presbyteries of New York and New Castle, constituted the Synod of New York. This body, composed of the friends of the Whitefieldian revival, say: "We do declare and testify

* These documents may be seen in full in Baird's Collection, and in Hodge's Constitutional History, vol. i., chap. 3.

our constitution, order, and discipline, to be in harmony with the established Church of Scotland. The Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and Directory, adopted by them, are in like manner adopted by us." The first article of the terms of union, by which the two Synods were united, in 1758, and which was unanimously adopted, is as follows: "Both Synods having always approved and received the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as an orthodox and excellent system of doctrine, founded on the word of God; we do still receive the same as the confession of our faith, and also adhere to the plan of worship, government, and discipline, contained in the Westminster Directory; strictly enjoining it on all our ministers and probationers for the ministry, that they preach and teach according to the form of sound words in the said Confession and Catechisms, and avoid and oppose all errors contrary thereto." When the General Assembly was constituted, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms were declared to be parts of the Constitution of the Church, and every candidate for the ministry was required, previous to his ordination, to receive that Confession, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. From the beginning, therefore, the mind of our Church has been that that "system of doctrine" in its integrity, not the substance of those doctrines, was the term of ministerial communion. For a fuller discussion of this subject we would refer our readers to *Hodge's Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church*, vol. i., chap. 3. It is there shown that no exception to the Confession of Faith, touching any of the doctrines constituting that system, was ever allowed.

3. Not only are the plain meaning of the words, and the *animus imponentis* opposed to the interpretation of the ordination service now under consideration, but that interpretation is liable to the further objection, that the phrase "substance of doctrine" has no definite assignable meaning. What the substance of any given doctrine is cannot be historically ascertained or authenticated. No one knows what a man professes, who professes to receive only the substance of a doctrine, and, therefore, this mode of subscription vitiates the whole intent and value of a confession. Who can tell what is the substance of the doctrine of sin? Does the substance include all the forms under which the doctrine has been, or can be held, so that whoever holds any one of those forms, holds the substance of the doctrine? If one man says that nothing is sin but the voluntary transgression of known law; another, that men are responsible only for their purposes to the exclusion of their feelings; another, that an act to be voluntary, and therefore sinful, must be deliberate and not impulsive; another, that sin is merely limitation or imperfect development; another, that sin exists

only for us and in our consciousness, and not in the sight of God; another, that sin is any want of conformity in state, feeling, or act, to the law of God; do all these hold the substance of the doctrine? What is the substance of the doctrine of redemption? The generic idea of redemption, in the Christian sense of the word, may be said to be the deliverance of men from sin and its consequences by Jesus Christ. Does every man who admits that idea hold the substance of the doctrine as presented in our Confession? If so, then it matters not whether we believe that that deliverance is effected by the example of Christ, or by his doctrine, or by his power, or by the moral impression of his death on the race or the universe, or by his satisfying the justice of God, or by his incarnation exalting our nature to a higher power. The same remark may be made in reference to all the other distinctive doctrines of the Confession. The general idea of "grace" is that of a remedial divine influence; but is that influence exercised only by ordering our external circumstances? or is it simply the moral influence of the truth which God has revealed? or that influence exalted by some special operation? is it *prœveniens* as well as assisting? is it common without being sufficient, or sufficient as well as common? is it irresistible, or efficacious only through its congruity or the coöperation of the sinner. Does the man who holds any one of these forms, hold the substance of the doctrine of grace? It is perfectly obvious that there is no authoritative standard by which to determine what the substance of a doctrine is; that the very idea of a doctrine is a truth in a specific form, and, therefore, those who do not hold the doctrines of the Confession in the form in which they are therein presented, do not hold the doctrines. It is equally obvious, that no definite, intelligible, trustworthy profession of faith is made by the man who simply professes to hold the substance of certain doctrines. Such a mode of adopting the Confession of Faith is morally wrong, because inconsistent with the plain meaning of the words, and with the mind of the Church, and because it renders the adoption nugatory.

4. This system has been tried, and found to produce the greatest disorder and contention. Men acting on the principle of receiving the Confession for substance of doctrine, have entered the ministry in our Church, who denied the doctrine of imputation, whether of Adam's sin or of Christ's righteousness; the doctrine of the derivation of a sinful depravity of nature from our first parents; of inability; of efficacious grace; of a definite atonement; that is, of an atonement having any such special reference to the elect, as to render their salvation certain. In short, while professing to receive "the system of doctrine" contained in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, they have rejected almost every doctrine which gives that system its distinctive character.

It was this principle more than any other cause, and probably more than all other causes combined, that led to the division of our Church in 1838, and it must produce like disasters should it again be brought into practical application among us.

The second interpretation given to the question, "Do you receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?" is, that the person who answers that question in the affirmative does thereby profess to receive and adopt every proposition contained in that Confession as a part of his own faith. The objections to this view are substantially the same as those urged against the view already considered.

1. It is contrary to the plain, historical meaning of the words. To adopt a book as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and to adopt every proposition contained in that book, are two very different things. The book, although a confession of faith, may contain many propositions by way of argument or inference, or which lie entirely outside the system, and which may be omitted, and yet leave the system in its integrity. The words "system of doctrine," have a definite meaning, and serve to define and limit the extent to which the Confession is adopted.

No man has the right to put upon them his own sense. He must take them in their historical sense, *i. e.* in the sense which by historical proof it may be shown they were intended to bear, just as the phrase "Holy Scriptures" must be taken in its historical sense. By the words "system of doctrine," as used in our ordination service, as remarked on a preceding page, are not to be understood the general doctrines of Christianity, nor the whole system of a man's convictions on politics, economics, morals, and religion, but the theological system therein contained. That is the established meaning of the phrase. The Westminster divines did not intend to frame a new system of doctrines, nor have they done it. They have simply reproduced and presented, with matchless perspicuity and precision, the system of doctrines common to the Reformed Churches. That is the system which the candidate professes to adopt, and no one can rightfully demand of him either more or less. It is one thing to adopt the system of doctrine and order of worship contained in the Book of Common Prayer, and quite another thing to "assent and consent" to everything contained in that book, as the clergy of England are required to do. So it is one thing to adopt the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession, and quite another thing to adopt every proposition contained in that Confession. Many a man could do the one, who could not do the other.

2. A second objection to this interpretation of the adoption of the

Confession is, that it is contrary to the *animus imponentis*, or mind of the Church. The mind of the Church on this subject is indicated and established, first, by the words employed; secondly, by the official explanations of the sense in which these words are to be taken; thirdly, by the contemporaneous testimony of the men who framed the constitution, or acted under it; and, fourthly, by the uniform action of the Church. First, as to the words employed. If the Church intended that the candidate should adopt every proposition contained in the Confession of Faith, why did she not say so? It was very easy to express that idea. The words actually used do not, in their plain, established meaning, express it. The simple fact that no such demand is made, is evidence enough that none such was intended. The Church makes a clear distinction between the terms of Christian communion, of ministerial communion, and the condition on which any one is to be admitted to the office of professor in any of her theological seminaries. For Christian communion, she requires competent knowledge, and a credible profession of faith and repentance; for ministerial communion, the adoption of the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession; for admission to the office of a professor, she exacts the promise, "not to teach anything which directly or indirectly contradicts anything taught in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, or Form of Government in this Church." Does all this mean nothing? Do these differently worded demands all amount to the same thing? This is impossible. The words have not only a different meaning, but there is an obvious reason for the different demand in these several cases. More is in Scripture required for admission to the office of a minister, than is required for admission to Church privileges; and more may reasonably be demanded of a professor than of a minister. Whatever a professor's private convictions may be as to anything not included in the system of doctrines, he is bound to avoid going counter to the standards of the Church whose servant he is. He may think that ministers and ruling elders do not differ in office, but he cannot properly officially inculcate that idea. The mind of the Church, therefore, as to the meaning of the ordination service, is already indicated by the words employed.

Secondly, This is placed, as it seems to us, beyond dispute, by the official explanation given of the words in question. The original Synod of Philadelphia officially declared that there were certain clauses in the Westminster Confession relating to the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, which they did not adopt. This was no less true of the two Synods of Philadelphia and New York after the schism, and of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia after the union. Yet all these bodies uniformly declared for themselves, and

required all candidates to declare, that they received that "Confession as the confession of their faith," or that they "received and adhered to the system of doctrines" therein contained. Every minister received, and every candidate ordained, was required to make that declaration. It cannot be denied, therefore, that the Church understood the adoption of the Westminster Confession as not involving the adoption of every proposition contained in that book. Let it be remembered that the formula of adoption was not, "Do you receive the Westminster Confession, with the exception of certain clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters, as the confession of your faith?" but simply, "Do you receive that Confession," or, "the system of doctrine in that Confession?" It was not considered necessary to make that exception, because the language was not intended to extend to every proposition, but only to "the system of doctrine." This is the Church's own official explanation of the sense of the words in question.

Thirdly, The mind of the Church as to this point is determined by contemporaneous testimony. There were three forms of opinion on the subject of confessions in our original Synod. First; There was a very small class represented by President Dickinson, who were opposed to all creeds of human composition. They entered a protest, signed by four ministers,* against the overture for the adoption of a confession as a test of orthodoxy. On this subject President Dickinson said: "The joint acknowledgment of our Lord Jesus Christ for our common head, of the sacred Scriptures as our common standard both of faith and practice, with a joint agreement in the same essential and necessary articles of Christianity, and the same methods of worship and discipline, are a sufficient bond of union for the being and well-being of any Church under heaven."† This small class, therefore, made no distinction between Christian and ministerial communion, requiring for the latter, as well as for the former, simply agreement in the "necessary and essential articles of Christianity." Another class, represented by Mr. Creaghead, who afterward left our Church mainly on account of the imperfect adoption of the Confession of Faith,‡ desired unqualified adherence to the Confession, and to all that it contained. The third class, including the great body of the Synod, insisted on the adoption of "the system of doctrine" contained in the Confession, admitting that there were propositions in the book not essential to the system, or even connected with it, which they did not receive. With

* Those ministers were Malachi Jones, Joseph Morgan, Jonathan Dickinson, and David Evans. Of these, Messrs. Jones and Evans were Welsh, and Mr. Morgan probably either Welsh or English.

† See Constitutional History, page 170.

‡ Ibid. page 197.

this class the whole body of ministers subsequently concurred, and established this as the permanent condition of ministerial communion. Mr. Thompson, the leader of the Synod, and author of the overture for the adoption of the Confession, says, that the object of the measure was to protect our infant Church from the inroads of error; "of Arminianism, Socinianism, Deism, and Free-thinking," especially, he says, from Ireland, whence the larger supply of ministers was expected. Although the Synod unanimously declared that they adopted everything in the Confession, except certain clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters, yet as there was this exception, they were forced to limit the adoption to the "necessary and essential articles," or, as it is elsewhere expressed, to "the system of doctrine." As, however, the words of the preamble to the adopting act, declaring that the Synod received the Confession "in all the essential and necessary articles," were interpreted by some to mean the essential doctrines of the gospel, these words became a bone of contention, and called for frequent explanations. Mr. Creaghead made them the ground of his secession, saying that the Synod had never adopted the Confession in all its articles or chapters. To him Mr. Samuel Blair replied, that the Synod did expressly adopt the Confession in all its articles or chapters, excepting only to certain clauses. On the other hand, the Rev. Samuel Harker, having been suspended from the ministry for certain Arminian doctrines, complained that his suspension was a violation of the adopting act, which required only agreement in the essential doctrines of Christianity. In his published reply to this complaint, Mr. John Blair says, that Mr. Harker takes the words cited "in a sense in which it is plain the Synod never intended they should be taken." "The Synod," he adds, "say essential in doctrine, worship, or government, *i. e.* essential to the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, considered as a system, and to the mode of worship, and to the plan of government contained in our Directory. Now what unprejudiced man of sense is there, who will not readily acknowledge that a point may be essential to a system of doctrine as such, to our mode of worship, and to Presbyterial government, which is not essential to a state of grace?" "That, therefore, is an essential error in the Synod's sense, which is of such malignity as to subvert or greatly injure the system of the doctrine, and mode of worship and government, contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Directory."* Such is the explanation of the adoption of the Confession of Faith, given by the original framers of the act, and by their contemporaries. They did

* See "The Synod of New York and Philadelphia vindicated. In reply to Mr. Samuel Harker's Appeal to the Christian World. By a member of the Synod."

not merely receive it for "substance of doctrine," nor did they adopt all the propositions which it contains, but they received the system of doctrine" therein taught in its integrity.

Fourthly, The mind of the Church on this subject is clearly evinced by the uniform action of our Church courts, from the highest to the lowest. So far as we have been able to learn from the records, no man has ever been refused admission to the ministry in our Church, who honestly received "the system of doctrine" contained in the Westminster Confession, simply because there are propositions in the book to which he could not assent. And no Presbyterian minister has ever been suspended or deposed on any such ground. It is a perfectly notorious fact, that there are hundreds of ministers in our Church, and that there always have been such ministers, who do not receive all the propositions contained in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms. To start now, at this late day, a new rule of subscription, which would either brand these men with infamy, or exclude them from the Church, is simply absurd and intolerable

This introduces our third objection. The principle that the adoption of the Confession of Faith implies the adoption of all the propositions therein contained, is not only contrary to the plain, historical meaning of the words which the candidate is required to use, and to the mind of the Church in imposing a profession of faith, but the principle is impracticable. It cannot be carried out without working the certain and immediate ruin of the Church. Our Confession is a large book; beside the system of doctrine common to all the Reformed Churches, it contains deliverances on many other topics relating to the Church, the state, and to our social relations. No doubt the original framers of the Westminster Confession, or the majority of them, thought these deliverances both important and scriptural. No doubt also the majority of our own Church have concurred in so regarding them. But this is a very different thing from making the adoption of these judgments, all and several, a condition of ministerial communion. One man may dissent from one of them, and another from another, while some may adopt them all; and to many of them they may attach very great importance, without recognizing them as terms of communion. Thus our standards distinctly teach, that the Church is bound to admit all true Christians "to fellowship in sacred ordinances." Yet there have always been, and there still are, some among us who deny this. They press so far the idea of the Church as a witnessing body, that they will not commune with any Christians whose creed they cannot adopt; neither will they receive to the communion of the Presbyterian Church any who do not adopt its doctrinal standards. This rejecting from our communion those whom Christ receives into fellowship with

himself, is revolting to the great body of our ministers and members. Yet who would think of making departure from our standards on this point, the ground either of reproach or of judicial process. Again, our book recognizes the right of a woman to divorce her husband, as well as that of a man to divorce his wife. Some of our most distinguished men, however, hold that the Scriptures give the right of divorce solely to the husband. Our book also teaches that wilful desertion is a legitimate ground of divorce, *a vinculo matrimonii*, but many of our brethren in the ministry do not believe this. Other Presbyterians again, knowing that our Lord says, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery," cannot bring themselves to believe that there can be any such divorce as renders a second marriage lawful. Our standards deny the lawfulness of the marriage of a man with the sister of his deceased wife, yet it is notorious that a large portion, probably a large majority, of our ministers openly reject that doctrine. Now what is to be thought of a rule, which, if applied, would cast out of the ministry all these classes—a rule which would have strangled the Church in its infancy, and which would kill it now in a week—a rule which would have deposed from the ministry the venerable Dr. Ashbel Green, and scores of men among our fathers of like standing? If the rule that no man should be allowed to exercise the ministry in our Church, who did not adopt every proposition contained in the Confession of Faith, should be carried out, we verily believe we should be left almost alone. We are not sure that we personally know a dozen ministers besides ourselves, who could stand the test. We should have to mourn the exodus of our valued friends, the editors of the *Presbyterian*, and should doubtless be called to bid a tearful adieu to the venerable "G.," of Richmond, Virginia. As we have no desire to sit thus solitary on the ruins of our noble Church, we enter a solemn protest against a principle which would work such desolation.

4. There is another view of this subject. We all admit that the preservation of the truth is one of the most important duties of the Church, and that she is bound to guard against the admission of unsound men into the ministry. We all admit that the Holy Ghost calls men to preach the gospel, and that soundness in the faith is one of the marks by which that call is authenticated to the Church. We admit, further, that the Church has no right to call men to the sacred office; that the authority to preach does not come from her; that the prerogative of the Church is simply to judge of the evidence of a divine call. Her office is purely ministerial, and should be exercised cautiously and humbly. She has no more right unduly to lower, or to raise unduly the evidence which she demands of a vocation to the min-

istry, than she has to alter the evidence of a call to grace and salvation. If she does not, and dares not, require perfect holiness of heart and life, as proof of a call to fellowship with the Son of God, neither can she demand perfect knowledge or perfect freedom from error, as evidence of a call to the ministry. Now, who is prepared, standing in the presence of Christ, and acting in his name, to say, that so far as the Presbyterian Church can prevent it, no man shall be ordained to the ministry, no man shall be a pastor, no man shall be a missionary, no man shall preach the gospel anywhere, to the poor and the perishing, who does not believe that wilful desertion is a legitimate ground of divorce? Who is ready to shut up every Church, silence every pulpit, abandon every missionary station, where that principle is not maintained? There doubtless have been, and there still may be, men who would do all this, and, in the mingled spirit of the Pharisee and Dominican, rejoice in the desolation they had wrought, and shout, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." God forbid that such a spirit should ever gain the ascendency in our Church. Let us keep our hands off of God's ark, and not assume to be more zealous for his truth, or more solicitous for the purity of his Church, than he is himself. We may well bear with infirmities and errors which he pities and pardons in his servants.

There is another great evil connected with these inordinate demands. Whenever a man is induced either to do what he does not approve, or to profess what he does not believe, his conscience is defiled. Those who lead their brethren thus to act, the Apostle says, cause them to offend, and destroy those for whom Christ died. To adopt every proposition contained in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, is more than the vast majority of our ministers either do, or can do. To make them profess to do it, is a great sin. It hurts their conscience. It fosters a spirit of evasion and subterfuge. It teaches them to take creeds in a "non-natural sense." It at once vitiates and degrades. There are few greater evils connected with establishments than the overwhelming temptations which they offer to make men profess what they do not believe. Under such strict requirements, men make light of professions, and are ready to adopt any creed which opens the door to wealth or office. The over strict, the world over, are the least faithful.

The third interpretation of the formula prescribed for the adoption of the Confession of Faith is the true *via media*. It is equally removed from "the substance of doctrine" theory, which has no definite meaning, leaving it entirely undetermined what the candidate professes; and from the impracticable theory which supposes the candidate to profess to receive every proposition contained in the Confession. What every

minister of our Church is bound to do is to declare that he "receives and adopts the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." The words "system of doctrine" have a fixed, historical meaning. The objection that it is an open question, what doctrines belong to the system and what do not, and therefore if the obligation be limited to the adoption of the system, it cannot be known what doctrines are received and what are rejected, is entirely unfounded. If the question, "What is the system of doctrine taught by the Reformed Churches?" be submitted to a hundred Romanists, to a hundred Lutherans, to a hundred members of the Church of England, or to a hundred sceptics, if intelligent and candid, they would all give precisely the same answer. There is not the slightest doubt or dispute among disinterested scholars as to what doctrines do, and what do not belong to the faith of the Reformed. The Westminster Confession contains three distinct classes of doctrines. First, those common to all Christians, which are summed up in the ancient creeds, the Apostles', the Nicene and the Athanasian, which are adopted by all Churches. Secondly, those which are common to all Protestants, and by which they are distinguished from Romanists. Thirdly, those which are peculiar to the Reformed Churches, by which they are distinguished, on the one hand, from the Lutherans, and on the other from the Remonstrants, or Arminians, and other sects of later historical origin. From the Lutherans the Reformed were distinguished principally by their doctrine on the sacraments, and from the Arminians, by the five characteristic points of Augustinianism, rejected by the Remonstrants, and affirmed at the Synod of Dort by all the Reformed Churches, viz.: those of Switzerland, Germany, France, England and Scotland, as well as of Holland. What those points are everybody knows. First. The doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, *i. e.*, that the sin of Adam is the judicial ground of the condemnation of his race, so that their being born in sin is the penal consequence of his transgression. Second. The doctrine of the sinful, innate depravity of nature, whereby we are indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good. Therefore there can be no self-conversion, no cooperation with the grace of God in regeneration, as the Arminians taught, and no election not to resist as the Lutherans affirmed. With this doctrine of absolute inability consequently is connected that of efficacious, as opposed to merely preventing and assisting grace. Thirdly. The doctrine that as Christ came in the execution of the covenant of redemption, in which his people were promised to him as his reward, his work had a special reference to them, and rendered their salvation certain. Fourth. The doctrine of gratuitous, personal election to eternal life; and, Fifth. The doctrine of the perseverance of

the saints. It is a matter of history that these doctrines constitute the distinguishing doctrines of the Reformed Churches. And, therefore, any man who receives these several classes of doctrine, (viz.: those common to all Christians, those common to all Protestants, and those peculiar to the Reformed Churches,) holds in its integrity the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession. This is all that he professes to do when he adopts that Confession in the form prescribed in our Constitution. A man is no more at liberty to construct a system of theology for himself, and call it the system contained in the Confession of Faith, than he is authorized to spin a system of philosophy out of his head, and call it Platonism. The first argument, therefore, in favour of this interpretation of our ordination service is that it is in accordance with the literal, established meaning of the words, and attaches to them a definite meaning, so that every one knows precisely what the candidate professes.

2. The second argument is, that such was and is the intention of the Church in requiring the adoption of the Confession. This has already been proved from the meaning of the language employed, from the official explanations given of that language, from the declarations of the framers of our Constitution, and from the uniform practice of the Church. No case can be produced from our annals of any man being censured or rejected, who received the system of doctrines contained in the Confession of Faith, in the sense above stated. The Church in point of fact, never has required more, and no man has now the right to exalt or extend her requirements. What is here said does not imply that the deliverances contained in the Confession relating to civil magistrates, the power of the state, conditions of Church membership, marriage, divorce, and other matters lying outside of "the system of doctrine" in its theological sense, are unimportant or without authority. They are the judgments of the Church solemnly expressed on very important subjects; but they are judgments which she most wisely has not seen fit to make conditions of ministerial communion. As she does not require the adoption of her whole system of doctrine as the condition of Church fellowship; so she does not require the adoption of these collateral and subordinate judgments as the condition of ministerial communion. And as her receiving gladly to her bosom thousands who are not able intelligently to adopt her whole system of faith, does not imply that she does not value that system, or that she does not strive to bring all her members, even the weakest, to adopt it in its integrity; so her not making her judgments of points lying outside of that system a condition of ministerial communion, does not imply that she undervalues those judgments, or that she would not rejoice to see them universally embraced. There are many things both true and

good which cannot be made the condition of either Christian or ministerial fellowship.

3. A third argument in favour of this view of the meaning of the formula used in the ordination service is, that it is the only one consistent with a good conscience, and with the peace and union of the Church. To make every minister affirm that he adopts as a part of his faith every proposition contained in the Confession of Faith, would make the vast majority of them profess an untruth, and what those demanding the profession know to be untrue. This is a dreadful evil. And it is a very great evil for any portion of our brethren to represent the great majority of their fellow-ministers as guilty of a false profession. This is done by every man who asserts that to adopt the system of doctrine contained in the Confession means to adopt every proposition in the book. He thereby asserts that every minister who does not believe that desertion is a scriptural ground of divorce, or that every true Christian should be received to sealing ordinances, or that a man may not marry his desceased wife's sister, is guilty of a breach of his ordination vows.

Does not the doctrine concerning subscription here advocated answer all desirable or practicable purposes? We can agree; and to a wonderful extent, to an extent greater than in any other age, in so large a communion, we do agree as to "the system of doctrine." Our ministers hold the faith of the Reformed Churches in its integrity. This they are bound to do, and this they do with exceptions so few that it would be difficult to point them out. If we are not satisfied with this, we shall soon split into insignificant sects, each contending for some minor point, and all allowing "the system of doctrine" to go to destruction. If there is any dependence to be placed on the the teachings of history, the men who begin with making the tithing of anise and cummin of equal importance with justice and mercy, are sure in the end to cling to the anise, and let the mercy go.

As so many of our brethren have taken exception to the remarks in our last number, we deem this extended exposition of our views on the matter of subscription, due to them no less than to ourselves. We are confident there is no real disagreement between us on this subject. It is a misunderstanding, as we hope and believe, due to the absence of all explanation or limitation of a passing remark, which, although true in itself, and true in the sense intended, was capable of an application wide of the truth.

b. In View of the Reunion. [*]

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Every minister at his ordination is required to declare that he adopts

[*From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1867, p. 506.]

the Westminster Confession and Catechism, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the sacred Scriptures. There are three ways in which these words have been, and still are, interpreted. First, some understand them to mean that every proposition contained in the Confession of Faith is included in the profession made at ordination. Secondly, others say that they mean just what the words import. What is adopted is the "system of doctrine." The system of the Reformed Churches is a known and admitted scheme of doctrine, and that scheme, nothing more or less, we profess to adopt. The third view of the subject is, that by the system of doctrine contained in the Confession is meant the essential doctrines of Christianity and nothing more.

As to the first of these interpretations it is enough to say: 1. That it is not the meaning of the words. There are many propositions contained in the Westminster Confession which do not belong to the integrity of the Augustinian, or Reformed system. A man may be a true Augustinian or Calvinist, and not believe that the Pope is the Antichrist predicted by St. Paul; or that the 18th chapter of Leviticus is still binding. 2. Such a rule of interpretation can never be practically carried out, without dividing the Church into innumerable fragments. It is impossible that a body of several thousand ministers and elders should think alike on all the topics embraced in such an extended and minute formula of belief. 3. Such has never been the rule adopted in our Church. Individuals have held it, but the Church as a body never has. No prosecution for doctrinal error has ever been attempted or sanctioned, except for errors which were regarded as involving the rejection, not of explanations of doctrines, but of the doctrines themselves. For example, our Confession teaches the doctrine of original sin. That doctrine is essential to the Reformed or Calvinistic system. Any man who denies that doctrine, thereby rejects the system taught in our Confession, and cannot with a good conscience say that he adopts it. Original sin, however, is one thing; the way in which it is accounted for, is another. The doctrine is, that such is the relation between Adam and his posterity, that all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, are born in a state of sin and condemnation. Any man who admits this, holds the doctrine. But there are at least three ways of accounting for this fact. The scriptural explanation as given in our standards is, that the "covenant being made with Adam not only for himself, but also for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." The fact that mankind fell into that estate of sin and misery in which they are born, is accounted for on the principle of representation. Adam was constituted our head and representative, so that his sin is the judicial ground of our condemnation and of the

consequent loss of the Divine image, and of the state of spiritual death in which all men come into the world. This, as it is the scriptural, so it is the Church view of the subject. It is the view held in the Latin and Lutheran, as well as in the Reformed Church, and therefore belongs to the Church catholic. Still it is not essential to the doctrine. Realists admit the doctrine, but unsatisfied with the principle of representative responsibility, assume that humanity as a generic life, acted and sinned in Adam, and, therefore, that his sin is the act, with its demerit and consequences, of every man in whom that generic life is individualized. Others, accepting neither of these solutions, assert that the fact of original sin (*i. e.*, the sinfulness and condemnation of man at birth) is to be accounted for in the general law of propagation. Like begets like. Adam became sinful, and hence all his posterity are born in a state of sin, or with a sinful nature. Although these views are not equally scriptural, or equally in harmony with our Confession, nevertheless they leave the doctrine intact, and do not work a rejection of the system of which it is an essential part.

So also of the doctrine of inability. That man is by the fall rendered utterly indisposed, opposite, and disabled to all spiritual good, is a doctrine of the Confession as well as of Scripture. And it is essential to the system of doctrine embraced by all the Reformed Church. Whether men have plenary power to regenerate themselves; or can coöperate in the work of their regeneration; or can effectually resist the converting grace of God, are questions which have separated Pelagians, the later Romanists, Semi-Pelagians, Lutherans, and Arminians, from Augustinians or Calvinists. The denial of the inability of fallen man, therefore, of necessity works the rejection of Calvinism. But if the fact be admitted, it is not essential whether the inability be called natural or moral; whether it be attributed solely to the perverseness of the will, or to the blindness of the understanding. These points of difference are not unimportant; but they do not affect the essence of the doctrine.

Our Confession teaches that God foreordains whatever comes to pass; that he executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence; that his providential government is holy, wise, and powerful, controlling all his creatures and all their actions; that from the fallen mass of men he has, from all eternity, of his mere good pleasure, elected some to everlasting life; that by the incarnation and mediatorial work of his eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the effectual working of his Spirit, he has rendered the salvation of his people absolutely certain; that the reason why some are saved and others are not, is not the foresight of their faith and repentance, but solely because he has elected some and not others, and that in execution of his purpose,

in his own good time, he sends them the Holy Spirit, who so operates on them as to render their repentance, faith, and holy living absolutely certain. Now it is plain that men may differ as to the mode of God's providential government, or the operations of his grace, and retain the facts which constitute the essence of this doctrinal scheme. But if any one teaches that God cannot effectually control the acts of free agents without destroying their liberty; that he cannot render the repentance or faith of any man certain; that he does all he can to convert every man, it would be an insult to reason and conscience, to say that he held the system of doctrine which embraces the facts and principles above stated.

The same strain of remark might be made in reference to the other great doctrines which constitute the Augustinian system. Enough, however, has been said to illustrate the principle of interpretation for which Old-school men contend. We do not expect that our ministers should adopt every proposition contained in our standards. This they are not required to do. But they are required to adopt the system; and that system consists of certain doctrines, no one of which can be omitted without destroying its identity. Those doctrines are, the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and the consequent infallibility of all their teachings; the doctrine of the Trinity, that there is one God subsisting in three persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit, the same in substance and equal in power and glory; the doctrine of decrees and predestination as above stated; the doctrine of creation, viz., that the universe and all that it contains is not eternal, is not a necessary product of the life of God, is not an emanation from the divine substance, but owes its existence as to substance and form solely to his will: and in reference to man, that he was created in the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and not *in puris naturalibus*, without any moral character; the doctrine of providence, or that God effectually governs all his creatures and all their actions, so that nothing comes to pass which is not in accordance with his infinitely wise, holy, and benevolent purposes;—the doctrine of the covenants: the first, or covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience, and the second, or covenant of grace, wherein God freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all who are ordained unto life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe;—the doctrine concerning Christ our Mediator, ordained of God to be our prophet, priest, and king, the head and Saviour of his Church, the heir of all things and judge of the world, unto whom he did, from eternity, give a people to be his seed, to be by him

in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified, and that the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father, took upon him man's nature, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; that this Lord Jesus Christ by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given to him;—the doctrine of free will, viz.: that man was created not only a free agent, but with full ability to choose good or evil, and by that choice determine his future character and destiny; that by the fall he has lost this ability to spiritual good; that in conversion God by his Spirit enables the sinner freely to repent and believe;—the doctrine of effectual calling, or regeneration, that those, and those only whom God has predestinated unto life, he effectually calls by his word and Spirit, from a state of spiritual death to a state of spiritual life, renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining their wills, thus effectually drawing them to Christ; yet so that they come most freely;—and that this effectual calling is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing foreseen in man; the doctrine of justification, that it is a free act, or act of grace on the part of God; that it does not consist in any subjective change of state, nor simply in pardon, but includes a declaring and accepting the sinner as righteous; that it is founded not on anything wrought in us or done by us; not on faith or evangelical obedience, but simply on what Christ has done for us, *i. e.*, in his obedience and sufferings unto death; this righteousness of Christ being a proper, real, and full satisfaction to the justice of God, his exact justice and rich grace are glorified in the justification of sinners;—the doctrine of adoption, that those who are justified are received into the family of God, and made partakers of the spirit and privileges of his children;—the doctrine of sanctification, that those once regenerated by the Spirit of God are, by his power and indwelling, in the use of the appointed means of grace, rendered more and more holy, which work, although always imperfect in this life, is perfected at death;—the doctrine of saving faith, that it is the gift of God, and work of the Holy Spirit, by which the Christian receives as true, on the authority of God, whatever is revealed in his word, the special acts of which faith are the receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life;—the doctrine of repentance, that the sinner out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but of the odiousness of sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does with grief and hatred of his own sins, turn from them unto God, with full purpose and endeavour after new

obedience;—the doctrine of good works, that they are such only as God has commanded; that they are the fruits of faith; such works, although not necessary as the ground of our justification, are indispensable, in the case of adults, as the uniform products of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers;—the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, that those once effectually called and sanctified by the Spirit, can never totally or finally fall from a state of grace, because the decree of election is immutable, because Christ's merit is infinite, and his intercession constant; because the Spirit abides with the people of God; and because the covenant of grace secures the salvation of all who believe;—the doctrine of assurance; that the assurance of salvation is desirable, possible, and obligatory, but is not of the essence of faith;—the doctrine of the law, that it is a revelation of the will of God, and a perfect rule of righteousness; that it is perpetually obligatory on justified persons as well as others, although believers are not under it as a covenant of works;—the doctrine of Christian liberty, that it includes freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemnation of the law, from a legal spirit, from the bondage of Satan and dominion of sin, from the world and ultimately from all evil, together with free access to God as his children; since the advent of Christ, his people are freed also from the yoke of the ceremonial law; God alone is the Lord of the conscience, which he has set free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. The doctrines concerning worship and the Sabbath, concerning vows and oaths, of the civil magistrate, of marriage, contain nothing peculiar to our system, or which is matter of controversy among Presbyterians. The same is true as to what the Confession teaches concerning the Church, of the communion of saints, of the sacraments, and of the future state, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of the final judgment.

That such is the system of doctrine of the Reformed Church is a matter of history. It is the system which, as the granite formation of the earth, underlies and sustains the whole scheme of truth as revealed in the Scriptures, and without which all the rest is as drifting sand. It has been from the beginning the life and soul of the Church, taught explicitly by our Lord himself, and more fully by his inspired servants, and always professed by a cloud of witnesses in the Church. It has moreover ever been the esoteric faith of true believers, adopted in their prayers and hymns, even when rejected from their creeds. It is this system which the Presbyterian Church is pledged to profess, to defend, and to teach; and it is a breach of faith to God and man if she fails to require a profession of this system by all those whom she receives or ordains as teachers and guides of her people. It is for the adoption of

the Confession of Faith in this sense that the Old-school have always contended as a matter of conscience.

There has, however, always been a party in the Church which adopted the third method of understanding the words "system of doctrine," in the ordination service, viz., that they mean nothing more than the essential doctrines of religion or of Christianity.

That such a party has existed is plain, 1. Because in our original Synod, President Dickinson and several other members openly took this ground. President Dickinson was opposed to all human creeds; he resisted the adoption of the Westminster Confession, and he succeeded in having it adopted with the ambiguous words, "as to all the essential principles of religion." This may mean the essential principles of Christianity, or the essential principles of the peculiar system taught in the Confession. 2. This mode of adopting the Confession gave rise to immediate and general complaint. 3. When President Davies was in England, the latitudinarian Presbyterians and other dissenters from the established Church, from whom he expected encouragement and aid in his mission, objected that our Synod had adopted the Westminster Confession in its strict meaning. President Davies replied that the Synod required candidates to adopt it only as to "the articles essential to Christianity."* 4. The Rev. Mr. Creaghead, a member of the original Synod, withdrew from it on the ground of this lax rule of adoption. 5. The Rev. Mr. Harkness, when suspended from the ministry by the Synod for doctrinal errors, complained of the injustice and inconsistency of such censure, on the ground that the Synod required the adoption only of the essential doctrines of the gospel, no one of which he had called in question.

While it is thus apparent that there was a party in the Church who adopted this latitudinarian principle of subscription, the Synod itself never did adopt it. This is plain, 1. Because what we call the adopting act, and which includes the ambiguous language in question, the Synod call "their preliminary act," *i. e.*, an act preliminary to the actual adoption of the Westminster Confession. That adoption was effected in a subsequent meeting (on the afternoon of the same day), in which the Confession was adopted in all its articles, except what in the thirty-third chapter related to the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. This is what the Synod itself called its adopting act. 2. In 1730 the Synod unanimously declared that they required all "intrants" to adopt the Confession as fully as they themselves had done. A similar declarative act of their meaning was passed in 1736. Again, in the reply to the complaints of Messrs. Creaghead and Hark-

* See Gillett's History of the Presbyterian Church, vol. i. p. 130.

ness, it was asserted that the Synod never intended that the Confession should be adopted only in those articles essential to Christianity. 3. Over and over again at different periods—in the negotiations for the union of the Synod of Philadelphia and that of New York and New Jersey, both parties declared their adhesion to the whole system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession. The same thing was done in the correspondence of our Synod with that of the Dutch Reformed Church, and in their letter to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in which that body was assured that we had the same standard of doctrine as they had. 4. Finally, when in 1787 the General Assembly was organized, it was solemnly declared that the Westminster Confession of Faith, as then revised and corrected, was part of the CONSTITUTION of this Church. No man has ever yet maintained that in adopting a republican constitution, it was accepted only as embracing the general principles of government, common to monarchies, aristocracies, and democracies.*

§ 8. Church Membership of Ministers. [†]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. x. sec. viii.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 169.]

An overture from the Presbytery of Miami brought up the question, whether ministers should have their names enrolled as members of particular churches? This question the Assembly answered in the negative. Several members agreed in favour of an affirmative answer on such grounds as the following: A minister without pastoral charge is not connected as a member with any particular church, unless his church relation is sustained and continued, notwithstanding his ordination. Again, cases may occur in which a minister may be deposed and yet not excommunicated, he is then no longer either a minister or Church member; he is not subject either to a presbytery or session. It was also argued that our constitution does not authorize a presbytery to excommunicate (which we presume is a mistake); the presbytery, it was said, may direct, but the session executes. If then, a minister is excommunicated, how can the sentence be carried into effect unless he is enrolled as the member from some particular church, and when no longer a member of the presbytery, subject to the jurisdiction of its session?

The brethren who argued for a negative answer to the overture, contended that membership in a particular church necessarily involved

* On these subjects see the Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church, by Charles Hodge, vol. i. chap. 3.

[† From article on "*The General Assembly;*" same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1843, p. 421.]

subjection to the session of that church, but as the minister is not subject to the session, he should not be enrolled as though he were under its authority. The relation which a minister sustains as a member of presbytery having jurisdiction over a session, is inconsistent with his subjection to that session as a church member. And although a ruling elder may, as a member of presbytery, be over a session, and yet as an elder, subject to its jurisdiction; yet as he is only a member of the presbytery during its sessions, and by special delegation, his relation to the church and to its session is essentially different from that of a minister. The General Assembly has decided that licentiates are members of particular churches, and subject to the jurisdiction of the session, until they are ordained; which, of course, implies that their relation to the church is changed by ordination; which is no longer that of membership in a particular church, but that of an overseer of a particular church and member of the Church in general. When he ceases to be a minister, he becomes *de facto* subject to the particular church within whose limits he may reside.

This whole question seems to be one more theoretical than practical. There was no diversity of opinion as to the relation in which a minister stands to the Church, but only as to the proper mode of denominating and expressing that relation. All admit that while he has a right to the privileges of a particular church, he is not subject to the jurisdiction of its session, and that he has no need of a letter of dismission and recommendation to entitle him to the same privileges in another particular church. Is he then a member of any particular church? That depends on what is meant by member, or on what membership implies. If it implies nothing more than a right to the privileges of the Church for himself and children, he is a member; but if it also implies subjection he is not a member. In all other cases it confessedly does imply subjection. It would seem very incongruous and of evil tendency, to express by the same term and in the same way, relations so essentially distinct, as those in which a pastor and private Christian stands to the same church. The decision of the Assembly, accordant as it is with the usage of all Presbyterian Churches, will, we doubt not, meet with general approbation.

§ 9. Ministers without Pastoral Charge. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. x., sec. viii.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 163.]

The committee to whom an overture has been referred, questioning the right of ministers not acting as pastors, to sit in Church judicato-

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*;" same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1835, p. 476.]

ries, reported *against* that right. Dr. Ely said, the adoption of the report would disfranchise ministers and destroy ministerial parity. Dr. Junkin said, it would take away half the ministers of New York. A president of a college was virtually the pastor of the college, and often performed the duties of a pastor. Mr. Dickey maintained, that it is a fundamental principle of Presbyterianism, that the Church should have the choice of their rulers. Reject this report and you leave some ministers, sitting to govern the Church, whom the Church never called; or others, whom having called, she, after trial, rejected. It contradicts first principles and the uniform practice of Presbyterians throughout the world, except in the United States. This subject after some further debate, was committed to Drs. Blythe and Hoge, and Messrs. Monfort and A. O. Patterson, to report to the next Assembly.

This is a difficult subject. When our constitution was revised there were some members of the committee of revision very anxious to introduce a provision declaring that no minister who was not a pastor should be allowed to sit in any Church judicatory as a member. It is certain that there are two principles of our system violated by our present practice on this subject. The one is that referred to by Mr. Dickey, and mentioned above; the other is, that there should be in all Church courts an equal representation of ministers and laymen. It is the theory of our constitution that each church has one pastor, and it has a right to send one ruling elder to presbytery and synod. And these bodies when constituted agreeably to the theory of Presbyterianism, are composed of an equal number of clergymen and laymen. Our present practice destroys entirely this equality. In many presbyteries, (as for example that of New Brunswick,) the number of ministers without charge is so great as to reduce the lay members to a very inconsiderable numerical part of these bodies; though there are other presbyteries where, from the number of their small vacant churches, the elders preponderate. There are also serious inconveniences resulting from the course now pursued, arising from the great multiplication of ministers of this class. We have so many presidents and professors of colleges, professors of theological seminaries, agents of benevolent societies, teachers of schools, besides supernumeraries of various kinds in the ministry, that we are not surprised that the pastors and elders are beginning to be alarmed. There are, however, both principles and inconveniences to be taken into account on the other side. When a man is ordained to the ministry he becomes a member of presbytery, and has all the rights and privileges of a presbyter. How can he be deprived of these rights? Besides, he is subject to the various judicatories of the Church, and bound by the laws which they may enact. Is he to have no voice in making these laws, either as a layman or minis-

ter? He cannot become a layman except by deposition. He is not a member of any Church, or subject to any session. Is he then to be subject to a presbytery of which he is not a member, and to be tried by men no longer his peers? As this matter, however, has been referred to a wise committee, we hope they may be able to discover some method of reconciling these and other difficulties, with the true principles of Presbyterianism, and the best interests of the Church.

§ 10. Demission of the Ministry.[*]

[*Form of Government*, chap. x., sec. viii.— *Digest* of 1873, p. 165 ff.]

THE last General Assembly adopted the following overture, viz.

"*Resolved*, That it be referred to the Presbyteries whether the following sections shall be added to the 15th chapter of the Form of Government, namely,

"16. The office of a minister of the gospel is perpetual, and cannot be laid aside at pleasure. No person can be divested of it but by deposition. Yet, from various causes, a minister may become incapable of performing the duties of the office; or he may, though chargeable with neither heresy nor immorality, become unacceptable in his official character. In such case he may cease to be an acting minister.

"17. Whenever a minister, from any cause not inferring heresy, crime or scandal, shall be incapable of serving the Church to edification, the presbytery shall take order on the subject, and state the fact, together with the reason of it, on their record. And when any person has thus ceased to be an acting minister, he shall not be a member of any presbytery or synod, but shall be subject to discipline as other ministers, provided always, that nothing of this kind shall be done without the consent of the individual in question, except by the advice of the synod; and provided, also, that no case shall be finally decided except at a stated meeting of the presbytery.

"18. Any minister having demitted the exercise of his office in the manner herein provided, may, if the presbytery which acted on his demission think proper, be restored to the exercise thereof, and to all the rights incident thereto, provided, that the consent of the synod be obtained, in case his demission was ordered by the synod in the manner above recited."

This overture makes a distinction between the exercise of the ministry and the ministry itself; the former may be demitted, the latter cannot be laid aside either at the pleasure of the party, or by the action of the presbytery. Once a minister, always a minister, unless in cases of deposition. The overture proposes that the want of ability to discharge the duties of the ministry, or want of acceptableness, shall, provided the party consent, be a sufficient reason for the demission of the exercise of the office. Should, in the judgment of the presbytery, these reasons exist, the presbytery may, with the advice of synod, en-

[*Article, same title, *Princeton Review*, 1859, p. 360,]

force this demission, without the assent of the party concerned. The effect of the demission contemplated is not to deprive the minister of his office, but only of certain of its prerogatives. He ceases to have the right to sit and act as a member of presbytery; but he does not become a layman. He is subject, not to the session, but to the presbytery; and may be restored to all the privileges of his office, by the simple vote of the presbytery, without any renewed trials or ordination.

To have any intelligent opinion as to the propriety of the proposed measure, we must, in the first place, understand what the ministry is. Is it a work, or an office? If the latter, what are its peculiar characteristics? In what sense is it "perpetual?" Why may it not be resigned as other offices may be? There is a large body of distinguished men, ancient and modern, and some Christian sects, who deny that the ministry is an office. They assert that it is simply a work. The distinction between the clergy and the laity is said to be not merely human as to its origin, but altogether arbitrary. No such distinction, it is said, is recognized in Scripture, or consistent with the common prerogatives of Christians. It is maintained that, in virtue of the universal priesthood of believers, all Christians have equal right to preach, baptize, and to administer the Lord's Supper. Such was the opinion of some of the Fathers, and such is the opinion of some of the most eminent modern scholars. It is not, however, the common doctrine of the Church; and it is not the doctrine of our Church. The ministry is properly an office, because it is something which cannot be assumed at pleasure by any and every one. A man must be appointed thereto by some competent authority. It involves not only the right, but the obligation to exercise certain functions, or to discharge certain duties; and it confers certain powers or prerogatives, which other men are bound to recognize and respect. Lawyers, physicians, merchants, and mechanics, are not officers. Any man may be a physician or merchant. No man is bound to discharge the duties of either. But judges and magistrates are officers. They are appointed to the posts which they occupy; they are bound to discharge its duties; and they are invested with certain prerogatives in virtue of their appointment. That the ministry is in this sense an office is plain from the numerous titles given in the New Testament to ministers, which imply official station. They are not only teachers, but overseers, rulers, governors. The qualifications for the office are carefully laid down, and the question, whether these qualifications are in any case possessed, is not left to the decision of those who aspire to the office, but to the Church, through her appointed organs. Men are, therefore, said to be called, appointed, or ordained, to the work of the ministry, by those who have authority thereto. And accordingly, the people are required to obey

those who have the rule over them, and whom the Holy Ghost has made their overseers.

But what is the nature of this office? Is it a temporary or a permanent one? According to one view, the office of the ministry has relation to one particular church, and is dependent on that relation. A man is a husband in relation to his own wife, and to no other woman. If legally separated from her, by her death or otherwise, he ceases to be a husband. A man is a governor of a particular State, he is no governor in relation to any other commonwealth; and when his term of office expires, or he resigns his post, he ceases to be a governor, and becomes a private citizen. According to this theory, minister and pastor are convertible terms. A man is a minister only in relation to the church which chooses him to be its pastor. Outside of that church he has no official power or authority; and when his connection with his particular congregation is dissolved, he becomes a layman. If elected by another church, he is reordained. This is the pure Independent theory. Many cases of such reordinations occur in the early history of the Puritans of New England. It is very evident that this is an unscriptural theory. All the ordinations specifically mentioned in the New Testament, *i. e.* all the persons therein mentioned as ordained to the work of the ministry, were thus ordained, not in reference to any particular church, but to the Church at large. According to this Independent theory, no man can be ordained to preach the gospel to the heathen; and some of its advocates are consistent enough to teach that no provision is made in the New Testament for the conversion of nations outside the Church. It need not be said that this is not the common doctrine of Christians, or that it is not the doctrine of Presbyterians. We hold in common with the great mass of believers, that the ministry is an office in the Church universal, designed for her enlargement and edification; that it is not dependent on the choice of any particular congregation, or on the relation which the minister may sustain as pastor, to any particular people. It is in this respect analogous to naval and military offices. A captain in the navy is as much a captain when on shore as when he is in command of a ship; and he may be transferred from one ship to another. His office is permanent. The Romish theory on this subject is, that orders, or ordination, is a sacrament; and a sacrament is a rite instituted by Christ, which has the power of conferring grace; and grace is an internal spiritual gift. In every case, therefore, of canonical ordination, there is this peculiar grace of orders communicated to the soul. In ordination to the priesthood this grace is, or includes supernatural power, giving ability to transubstantiate the bread and wine in the Eucharist into the body and blood of Christ, to remit sin, to

render the sacraments efficacious, &c., &c. Here, then, is an internal something constituting a man a priest, of which he cannot divest himself, and which by no act of man can be taken from him. It may, however, be forfeited. As baptismal grace, including the remission of sin and the infusion of a new principle of spiritual life, may be lost by mortal sin, and can be restored only by the sacrament of penance; so the grace of orders may be lost by certain crimes, such as heresy or schism. Hence, in the Romish Church, a priest, when convicted of such crime, is degraded before he is delivered over to the secular power to be executed. This service of degradation, however, is declarative rather than effective. It declares in a solemn and official manner that the offender has forfeited the grace received at his ordination, and has become a layman. It is evident that the ministry, according to this theory, must be in a peculiar sense a permanent office. It can neither be voluntarily laid aside, nor can a man be deprived of it. If the Holy Ghost is received in a specific form, or mode of manifestation, in ordination, he remains, until the condition occurs on which he has revealed his purpose to withdraw. If the gift of prophecy, or of miracles, or of tongues, were conferred on any man, he could not divest himself of that gift, nor could he be deprived of it by any act of the Church. It is so with the grace of orders. This, however, is not a Protestant doctrine. It is one of the essential and necessary elements of that cunningly-devised system of Romanism, which is after the working of Satan with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.

Protestants, however, also teach that the office of the ministry is permanent, though in a very different sense from that just stated. It is permanent, first, because it is not assumed or conferred for any limited or definite time. And secondly, because the candidate, in assuming the office, is understood to consecrate himself for life to the service of God in the work of the ministry. This is also the light in which the Church regards the matter when she, through her appropriate organs, ordains him to the work. There is nothing, however, in the Protestant, and especially in the Presbyterian doctrine, of the nature of the ministry or of ordination, to forbid the idea that the office itself, and not merely the exercise of the office, may, for just reasons, be laid aside or demitted.

The Protestant doctrine, as we understand it, on this subject, is this: First, that the call of the ministry is by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God is said to dwell in all the members of Christ's body, and to each member, as the apostle teaches us, is given a manifestation of the Spirit. 1 Cor. xii. 7. That is, while the Spirit manifests his presence in his enlightening and sanctifying influence, in different measures, in all the followers of Christ, he gives special gifts and quali-

fications to different individuals of their number; dividing to every man severally as he wills. In the Apostolic Church, he gave to some the gifts of plenary knowledge and infallibility, and thus made them apostles; to others, the gift of occasional inspiration, and thus made them prophets; to others, the gift of teaching, and thus made them the teachers or preachers of the word; to others again, the gift of healing, of miracles, or of tongues. Some of these gifts we know, both from the New Testament and from actual observation, were designed to be confined to the first age of the Church. They have accordingly ceased. We have no inspired and infallible men—no workers of miracles, no speakers with tongues. In other words, we have no apostles, nor prophets, nor men endowed with supernatural power.

There are other gifts, however, which we learn from Scripture and observation were designed to be permanent. The Holy Spirit confers the gifts for the ministry; and by thus conferring them, and exciting the desire to exercise them for the glory of God and the service of Christ, thereby manifests his will that those thus favoured should consecrate themselves to the preaching of the gospel. This is the true, divine call, to the ministry.

Second: The evidence of this call to him that receives it, is the consciousness of the inward gift and drawing of the Spirit, confirmed by those external workings of providence which indicate the will of God as to his vocation. The evidence of the Church is everything which tends to prove that the candidate has the qualifications for the office of the ministry, and that he is led to seek it from motives due to the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Third: Ordination is the solemn expression of the judgment of the Church, by those appointed to deliver such judgment, that the candidate is truly called of God to take part in this ministry, thereby authenticating to the people the divine call. This authentication, or ordination is, under all ordinary circumstances, the necessary condition for the exercise of the ministry in the Church; just as the judgment of the session that the candidate for baptism or for admisssion to the Lord's table, has the qualifications for Church membership, is the necessary condition of Church-fellowship.

As, however, neither the candidate nor the Church is infallible, there may, and doubtless often is, mistake in this matter. A man may honestly believe that he is called of God to the ministry, when he has never, in fact, been thus called. The Presbytery may concur in this erroneous judgment. If a mistake is made it ought to be corrected. If both the man himself and the Presbytery become convinced that he never was called to the ministry, why should they persist in asserting the contrary? So long as the man clings to his office, he thereby says, he

believes he is called to it by God; but this he may be thoroughly convinced is not true. Why then should he be required to assert what he knows to be false? The presbytery join in this false testimony; nay, they take upon themselves the whole responsibility of the falsehood, if they interpose their authority, and refuse to allow a man to demit an office to which both he and they are convinced he never was called. It is not merely, therefore, a man's right to demit the ministry, if he is satisfied God has not called him to the work; but it is his solemn duty to do it. And the presbytery have not only the right to allow him to do it, but they have no right to prevent it. They cannot force a man to be a minister against his will, and against his conscience; much less can they righteously force him to lie to the Church, and to the Holy Ghost, by making him say he is called, when he knows that he is not called.

There is nothing in the Protestant doctrine of the ministry, or of ordination, which stands in the way of the demission of the sacred office. We do not hold that the judgment of the Church is infallible; so that it can in no case be recalled or reversed. We do not hold that an inward gift, the grace of orders, is conferred in ordination so as to be beyond recall. Neither is there anything in the ordination vows, or the obligations assumed by the candidate, to prevent his laying the office aside. He does indeed promise to devote himself for life to the work of the ministry. But this promise is obviously conditional. It is conditioned on the possession of physical ability. If rendered paralytic or voiceless, the promise does not bind him. In like manner it is conditioned on the inward call of God. The man believes that it is the will of God that he should be a minister; and, on the ground of that belief, he promises to devote himself to the work. If he becomes satisfied that he never was called, in other words, that it is not the will of God that he should preach the gospel, then the ground on which the promise was made no longer exists.

The principle of demission is clearly recognized in our standards. That is, it is distinctly recognized that a minister may cease to be such, and become a layman. What is deposition but the declaration, on judicial grounds, on the part of a presbytery, that a minister of the gospel is no longer to be regarded as such? And what is that but a reversal of the judgment pronounced at his ordination? It is saying that the presbytery erred in deciding that the person in question was called of God to the ministry; for if he had been thus called, it was for life, and no presbytery could take away a permanent office conferred by God. The only difference between deposition and demission lies in the nature of the evidence on which the presbytery reverses its former judgment. In the case of deposition, it is some grave offence,

some heresy or crime, which clearly proves that the minister convicted of such offence is not called of God to preach the gospel. In the case of demission, it is anything, not involving a moral or religious offence, which satisfies the judgment and conscience of the man himself, and of the presbytery, or even of the latter alone, that the minister demitting his office, or called upon to demit it, was never called of God to the sacred office. Of course mere physical infirmity, or the weakness or imbecility of age, can never be such a proof. A minister or missionary, nay, Paul himself, after a life devoted to the service of God, in the ministry of his Son, crowned with every manifestation of the divine favour, might be superannuated or paralytic, yet no one would dream that this was any evidence that he had entered the ministry without a call from God. The evidence in question must be the opposite of the evidence of a divine call, viz.: the want of fitness for the office, the want of a desire to discharge its duties, the want of success, and the consequent inability to serve God or the Church in the work of the ministry. All this may, and in many cases is apparent, where there is every evidence of Christian character, and therefore where any act of discipline would be uncalled for and unjust.

As therefore there is nothing in the nature of the ministerial office, nor in the nature of ordination, nor in the obligations assumed by the candidate when he is ordained, nor in the infallibility of the presbytery, incompatible with the demission of the sacred office, it follows that for proper reasons it may be laid aside. In the second place, as before remarked, it ought, in the case supposed, to be laid aside. To continue to profess to be called of God, when we are satisfied that such is not the fact, and when the presbytery and the Christian public are equally convinced on the subject, is to profess a conscious untruth. This at first was a mistake in all concerned; but when the mistake is discovered and made apparent, then to persist in it, gives it the character of falsehood. In the third place, it is highly desirable that those who have thus mistaken their vocation, should be allowed to correct the error. It is not only wrong to constrain a man against his judgment, will and conscience, to retain the ministerial office; but it cannot be done. The office is in fact, in a multitude of cases, laid aside. Men once ordained give up their ministry. They not only cease to exercise it, but they virtually renounce it. They lay aside the title, they do not attempt to discharge its duties; they do not claim any of its prerogatives. They devote themselves to some secular pursuit, and are merged in the general class of laymen. For this, in the cases supposed, they are not to blame, and therefore they cannot be justly censured. They are often useful members of society and of the Church; but they are not ministers. Now if this is done, and must be done, it is surely proper that it

should be done regularly; that provision should be made to meet cases of this kind. Besides, it is a great evil that our Church courts should be encumbered with nominal members, who are incapable of discharging the duties of membership. And it is a still greater evil that men should be allowed to sit in those courts and exercise the powers of an office, to which all concerned are satisfied they have no legitimate call, and the duties of which they cannot fulfil. Such ministers are not only an incumbrance to our Church courts, disturbing the natural balance of our system, but it is a disgrace to the ministry and to the Church, to have men notoriously incompetent (however worthy they be), and who are merely nominal ministers—men who are laymen in their whole spirit and pursuits, designated and recognized as invested with the sacred office. It is best that things should be called by their right names. If a man is not a minister of the gospel (*i. e.* one who either does or has served God in the gospel of his Son) he should not be so designated or so regarded.

It is objected to all this, that if we make it thus easy to get rid of the ministry, less care will be exercised in entering it. We doubt the fact. The ministry in our country and in our Church, is not often entered from worldly motives. It is not sufficiently attractive to the mercenary. It is commonly an honest mistake on the part both of the candidate and of the presbytery, when men are ordained by the Church who are not called of God. But even if the fact be admitted which the objection assumes, it would be unwise to make the ministry a *cul-de-sac*, which whoever wanders into in the dark, must stay in it. It would be far better to make the egress from the ministry so wide that all who want to leave it, or who ought to leave it, may do so with the least possible difficulty or delay.

If our readers agree with the principles above stated, they must regard the overture submitted to the presbyteries as an illogical, half-way measure. It assumes that the office of the ministry cannot be demitted; but that a man may lay aside its exercise and be divested of its prerogatives. It assumes that the office is in such a sense permanent that it cannot be got rid of, except by deposition. But this assumption is illogical. It necessarily follows from the Protestant and Presbyterian doctrine of the ministry, of ordination, and of the fallibility of all Church courts, that the office is not permanent in any such sense. That doctrine supposes that both the candidate and presbytery may err; and it supposes that the error when discovered may be corrected. It is only on the assumption of the Romish doctrine of "the grace of orders," that the ministry can be regarded as in any such sense permanent as that it cannot be demitted. Besides, deposition implies that the office of the ministry is not in such a sense permanent as

to be inconsistent with demission. Deposition merely does for one reason, what demission does for another. Both reduce a minister to the condition of a layman. The one, therefore, is just as consistent with the true permanency of the office as the other.

Another objection to the overture as it now stands, is that it undertakes to separate things which in their nature are inseparable. If the ministry is an office of divine appointment, if men are called of God to be ministers, then the obligation to discharge its duties, and the right to exercise its prerogatives, are inseparable from the possession of the office. If God calls a man to be a minister, what right have we to say he shall not act as such? By allowing him to retain the office, we say he has a divine call to it; and if so, he has a divine right to exercise all its functions. The overture, therefore, in our view, involves a contradiction. It in effect says, that a man is, and is not a minister, at the same time; that he was mistaken in supposing he was called by the Spirit to be a minister, and nevertheless he is a minister. These are contradictory judgments.

We would greatly prefer a simple clause providing that whenever any minister, in good standing, is fully satisfied in his own judgment and conscience, that God has not called him to the ministry, he may, with the consent of presbytery, resign the office; and in case the presbytery is satisfied that a minister has no divine vocation to the ministry, although he himself may think otherwise, they shall have the right (with the consent of the Synod, if that be thought desirable) to cancel his ordination without censure, as in deposition it is done with censure.

§ 11. Commissions of Presbyteries and Synods. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. x., sec. viii., chap. xi., sec. iv.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 145, 154.]

The constitutionality and expediency of presbyteries and synods appointing "Commissions" of their body to try judicial cases, was brought before the last General Assembly, and referred, with very little discussion to a committee to report to the present Assembly. Dr. Hodge, on behalf of the committee, presented the following report:

"In the Minutes of the General Assembly for 1846, p. 210, is found the following resolution, viz.: '*Resolved*, That the records of the Synod of Virginia be approved, while in so doing the Assembly would be understood as expressing no opinion on the question decided by the synod, in reference to the authority of the presbyteries of Winchester and Lexington to appoint commissions in the case alluded to in the record of the synod.'

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*"; same topic. *Princeton Review*, 1847, p. 400.]

"It appears from the minutes, p. 216, that the following resolution was subsequently offered and referred to a committee consisting of Drs. Hodge, Lindsley, Musgrave, McFarland, and McDowell, to report thereon at the next Assembly, viz.: '*Resolved*, That in the judgment of this Assembly, it is contrary to the constitution and uniform practice of the Presbyterian Church in the United States for any ecclesiastical judicatory to appoint a commission to determine judicially any case whatever.'

"This resolution presents two questions for consideration, one of principle, the other of fact. First, Is it contrary to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States for its judicatories to appoint commissions to decide judicially cases which may be brought before them? Secondly, Are such appointments contrary to the uniform practice of our Church? Your committee are constrained to answer both these questions in the negative.

"That such appointments are not contrary to the constitution, the committee argue, 1st. Because the power in question is one of the inherent original powers of all primary Church courts. 2d. Because there is nothing in our constitution which forbids the exercise of that right.

"It is important in considering this subject, to bear in mind that the constitution is not a grant of powers to our primary Church courts, but a limitation, by treaty and stipulations, of the exercise of those powers. For example, a presbytery does not derive from the constitution (*i. e.* from the consent of other presbyteries) its right to ordain; but by adopting the constitution it has bound itself to exercise its inherent right of ordination only under certain conditions. Were it not for its voluntary contract with other presbyteries, it might ordain any man who, in its judgment, had the requisite qualifications for the ministry. It has, however, agreed not to ordain any candidate for that office, who has not studied theology for at least two years; who cannot read Greek and Hebrew; and who has not had a liberal education. The same remark might be made with regard to other cases, showing that the constitution does not confer power on our primary bodies, but it is of the nature of a treaty binding and guiding them in the exercise of the powers which they derive from the great Head of the Church. This being the case, all that is necessary to determine whether the power to act by commission belongs to our primary courts is to ascertain whether such power naturally belongs to them; and whether, if it does originally pertain to them, they have by adopting the constitution removed its exercise.

"That the power in question does inhere in our primary Church courts, may be inferred first, from their nature. It is a generally recognized principle that inherent, as opposed to delegated powers, may be exercised either by those in whom they inhere, or by their represen-

tatives. The powers inherent in the people, they may exercise themselves, or delegate to those whom they choose to act in their stead. We can see nothing in the Word of God, nor in the principles on which such bodies are constituted, which would forbid any presbytery or synod, if independent or untrammelled by treaty stipulations with other similar bodies, delegating their powers to a committee of their own number to act in their name, and subject to their review and control. Secondly. We infer that the power in question does belong originally to primary Church courts from universal consent. It is an undeniable fact that presbyteries and synods, when not constrained by special enactments, have in all countries where Presbyterianism has existed, acted on the assumption that they possessed the right of acting by commissions. It is on the principle that a presbytery may delegate its powers, our presbyteries are still in the habit of commissioning one or more ministers to organize churches, ordain elders and perform other similar acts.

"If then it be admitted that the right to act by commissions did belong to presbyteries and synods, were it not for the provisions of the constitution, the question arises, whether the constitution does forbid the exercise of this right.

"In answer to this question it may be remarked, that to deprive our judicatories of an original and important right, something more than mere implication is, in all ordinary cases, necessary. No one however pretends that there is any express prohibition of the exercise of the power in question, contained in the constitution. 2. No fair inference in favour of such prohibition can be drawn from the mere silence of the constitution. As the power is not derived from the constitution it is not necessary that it should be there recorded. As far as we recollect, the Westminster Directory is equally silent on the subject, yet it is admitted that under that instrument Church courts freely exercised this power.

"3. Nor can it be inferred that the constitution tacitly prohibits the exercise of this right, from the fact that it always treats of certain acts as being the acts of a presbytery or synod. An act does not cease to be a presbyterial act when performed by a committee in the name and by the authority of the presbytery. Even the ordinary process of reviewing records, is performed not by the whole presbytery or synod, but by a committee in their name and under their sanction. And the executive acts of ordination and installation, when performed by a committee are still presbyterial acts. Nothing was more common in the early portions of our history, than for our presbyteries to ordain by a committee. And yet our fathers did not deny that ordination was a presbyterial act. It cannot therefore be inferred from

the fact that the constitution recognizes certain acts as the acts of presbyteries and synods, that those acts may not be legitimately performed by a commission appointed for that purpose. Such commission is by delegation, and *pro hac vice*, the presbytery or synod. The body virtually resolves itself into a committee to meet at a certain time and place for a specific purpose.

"On these grounds your committee rest the conclusion that it is not contrary to the constitution of our Church that our primary Church courts should appoint a commission to determine judicially any case that may come before them.

"As to the second point embraced in the resolution under consideration, viz: whether such appointments are contrary to the uniform practice of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, it may be remarked, 1. That it is well known that the original Synod of Philadelphia, the Synod of New York, and the united Synod of New York and Philadelphia, from the original institution of the first mentioned body in 1716, to the formation of the General Assembly in 1788, did each, during their several periods of existence, annually appoint a commission with full synodical powers. This commission sometimes consisted of a definite number of members named for that purpose, and at others any member of the Synod who chose to attend was recognized as a member.

"There is therefore no principle better sanctioned by long continued usage in our Church, than the right of a synod to act by a commission in adjudicating any case that may come before them.

"2. This, however, is a small part of the evidence which bears on this subject. Not only did the judicatories above mentioned annually appoint a commission with full power for general purposes, but the original Presbytery of Philadelphia, the Synod of Philadelphia, the Synod of New York, and the united Synod of New York and Philadelphia, were uniformly in the habit of appointing special committees with full powers (*i. e.* commissions) to act in their name and with their authority, in any matter, executive or judicial. The Assembly would be fatigued by the citation of all the cases on record bearing on this subject. The following may be deemed sufficient:

"In 1713 a committee was appointed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia for the examination of Mr. Witherspoon, and if satisfied as to his qualifications, they were authorized to proceed to his ordination and settlement. Records, p. 32. In 1714 a similar committee was appointed by the presbytery for the examination and ordination of Mr. H. Evans. In 1715 two other candidates were ordained in the same manner. pp. 36, 37. In 1716, two more. p. 43. In all these, and in many similar cases subsequently recorded, the committees appointed for the purpose were invested with full presbyterial powers to

judge of the qualifications of the candidate, to determine whether he should be ordained or not, and if they saw fit, actually to ordain. In most cases the reports made by them show that they did ordain, in others they say that they declined to proceed on account of the incompetency of the candidate, or for some other sufficient reason.

"In 1717 a committee was sent to New Castle, Delaware, 'to receive and audit the reasons of the people of New Castle against the removal of Mr. Anderson (their pastor) to New York, or to any other place.' And 'it was further ordered, that the said committee do fully determine in that affair.' p. 47. The following year they reported that 'they had transported Mr. Anderson to New York, having had power lodged in them by the Synod to determine that affair.' p. 49.

"In 1723 a committee was appointed to act in the name and with the full power of the Synod, in a conference with the Connecticut ministers in relation to certain difficulties in the congregation of New York, arising out of the interference of the two bodies. p. 75.

"In 1720 it was 'overtured that a committee be sent to Rehoboth with full power from the Synod to act in their name and by their authority in the affair between Mr. Clement and the people, and that Mr. C. be suspended from the exercise of his ministry, until the determination of the committee.' The overture was carried in the affirmative, *nemine contradicente.*" p. 60. At that time therefore, there was not one member of the body who questioned the right of the Synod to act by committee in judicial cases. Again, it is said in the Record, 'The Synod having received letters from Snowhill, by way of complaint against Mr. D. Davis, have appointed Mr. McNish (and six others,) or any three of them, to be a committee to go to Snowhill, with full power to hear, examine, and determine about the complaints made or to be made against said Mr. Davis.'

"In 1722, a committee was appointed to attend at Fairfield, N. J., with full power to restore a suspended minister, unless they saw a sufficient reason to the contrary. p. 71.

"In 1724, a committee reported that they had not removed the suspension from Mr. Walton. p. 76. In 1726, difficulties having occurred in the Church at Newark, N. J., a committee was appointed to visit that place with full power of the Synod in all matters that may come before them in respect to that congregation, and to bring an account of what they do to the next Synod. p. 83.

"In 1727, a committee was sent to New York to accommodate differences in the Church there, 'and to receive Mr. Pemberton as a member of the Synod, or not as they should see cause.' p. 85. In 1731, a committee was sent to Goshen, to hear and determine matters of dispute in that congregation, 'with full powers.'

"In 1734, an appeal from the Presbytery of Donegal was presented to Synod, and by them referred to a committee to meet at Nottingham, 'with full power to hear said appeal, and to determine it by authority of Synod, they bringing an account of their proceedings therein to the next Synod. And the Synod do also empower the said committee to hear any matter . . . . that shall be brought before them by the said John Kirkpatrick and John Moor, (the appellants,) with relation to the affair aforesaid, and authoritatively to determine the same; appointing also that if either party do appeal from the determination of the committee, they shall enter their appeal immediately, that it may be finally determined by the next Synod.' p. 107.

"In 1735, another appeal from the same presbytery was referred to a committee to meet at ——— 'and determine the business.' p. 119. In the same year the two presbyteries of Philadelphia and East Jersey were appointed a committee to try the case of Rev. Mr. Morgan. p. 130. In 1735, a committee with full powers was sent to New York. p. 254. In 1751, a committee was sent to Jamaica, L. I., with authority to decide whether the pastor, Mr. Bostwick, should be removed to New York. p. 206. In 1759, an appeal from the Presbytery of New York was referred to a committee at Princeton, any seven of whom to be a quorum to try the matter. p. 312. A similar committee was sent to Chesnut Level in 1762. In 1764, the Synod decided that the censure inflicted by a committee was inadequate to the crimes contained in their charge. p. 338. In 1764, the Synod say, in reference to an appeal from New Castle presbytery, 'As this matter cannot be issued here we appoint (thirteen members) a committee to hear and try the merits of the case, and to issue the whole affair, and to take what methods they may think proper in relation thereto.' p. 340. In 1765, two appeals from the Presbytery of Donegal were presented, 'and the Synod,' it is said, 'considering the impossibility of determining the said affairs at present, have appointed a committee to issue and determine both matters.' p. 360.

"In 1766, a similar case occurred; an appeal from the Presbytery of Suffolk was referred to a committee 'to try and issue the whole affair.' p. 360.

"From all these cases it is apparent that from the beginning, the right has been claimed and exercised by our primary courts of appointing committees with full powers, (*i. e.* commissions) to act in their name and authority, in all kinds of cases, executive and judicial."

"Though from the altered circumstances of the Church, and the great increase in the number of presbyteries, this mode of action has been less necessary and therefore less common, since the adoption of the present constitution it has never been renounced, and, as far as known to your committee, never condemned by the Assembly. On the con-

trary, in the remarkable case in the Synod of Kentucky, it received the sanction of the Assembly in 1809. It is well known that the Cumberland Presbytery had, for some time, persisted in licensing and ordaining men who had not received a liberal education, and who refused to adopt the Confession of Faith. These proceedings were brought before the Synod of Kentucky, in 1805, by a review of the records of that presbytery. But as the synod had not sufficient data on which to act, as the case did not admit of delay, they appointed a commission consisting of ten ministers and six elders, 'vested with full synodical powers, to confer with the members of the Cumberland Presbytery, and to adjudicate on their presbyterial proceedings.' Much doubt was expressed in the Assembly of 1807, of the regularity of the proceedings of this commission; but as far as can be learned from the letter from the Assembly to the synod, the former body did not deny the right of the synod to appoint a commission. The Assembly requested the synod to review their acts in question, and demand that the licentiates of the presbytery should be re-examined, and in approving the action of the commission in suspending ministers without trial who had been irregularly ordained. The synod having reviewed all proceedings in this whole matter, and re-affirmed their decisions in relation to it, sent up their explanation and vindication, to the Assembly; which did not reach that body, however, until 1809. The action of the synod was in that year sustained without a dissenting voice, and the Assembly declared the synod entitled to the thanks of the whole Church for the firmness and zeal with which they had acted. See chap. ix. of Dr. Davidson's instructive and interesting History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky."

"In view therefore of the original rights of our judicatories, of the long continued practice of the Church, and of the great value of the right, on due occasions, of acting by commissions, the hope is respectfully expressed that the Assembly may do nothing which may have the effect of calling that right into question."

A motion was, in the first instance, made to adopt this report. But that motion was subsequently withdrawn, with a view to introduce a resolution for the indefinite postponement of the resolution referred by the last Assembly to the consideration of the committee. This was the disposition of the subject proposed and advocated by those who were in favour of the doctrine presented in the report. The resolution referred by the Assembly of 1846, declared it to be contrary to the constitution and uniform practice of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to decide judicially by commission any case whatever. The rejection of that resolution, or its indefinite postponement, was a refusal on the part of the Assembly to deny this right to our primary courts.

This was all the friends of the report wished, and the motion for indefinite postponement was accordingly made by the chairman of the committee. And this was the disposition ultimately made by common consent. The debate was interrupted by a motion for the indefinite postponement of the whole subject.

There was no opportunity afforded for testing the real sense of the house, but we have little doubt that a decided majority was in favour of the doctrine that our primary courts have the right to act by commission in any case that may come before them. The objections urged against this doctrine resolve themselves into two. First, that the constitution makes no mention of such a power. Secondly, that its exercise is liable to abuse.

The first of these objections rests on the radically false principle, combated in the report, that our courts get their powers from the constitution, a principle inconsistent with the essential doctrines of Presbyterianism. We hold that our courts get their powers from the head of the Church. He has instituted a government. He has determined the nature and limits of the powers to be exercised by Church courts. A constitution is and can be nothing but a written agreement between certain judicatories consenting to act together, as to the conditions on which they will exercise the powers given them from above. Now according to our Confession of Faith, "It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and the government of his Church; to receive complaints in cases of mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same." That is, by the word of God, Church courts have inherently certain legislative, judicial, executive powers. These powers inhere in them, just as by the gift of God, similar powers inhere in the community. And if they belong to our courts, it follows they can exercise them, in any way not inconsistent with their nature and design, and the limitations of the word of God, or their own voluntary agreement. Whether a presbytery shall ordain or install in full session, or by a commission, is a matter left entirely to its discretion. It is responsible to God for the exercise of this power, and also to its associate presbyteries. But that it has no right, in itself considered, to exercise its powers except in full session, seems to us a most extraordinary assumption. All analogy is certainly against it. The people delegate the powers which inhere in them, to be exercised by representatives acting in their name and by their authority. So do kings, so do parents. Why then may not primary Church courts? All usage is against it, the usage of the continental Presbyterian Church; the usage of the Church of Scotland; the usage of our own Church from

its very foundation, before and since the adoption of the present constitution. The Presbytery of Hanover, in Virginia, sent a commission to ordain men in Kentucky, and one venerable father on the floor of the Assembly, was understood to say that he himself was ordained in that way; and another member said that it was not two years since the Presbytery of Susquehanna, acted in an important case, by a commission. We have therefore, Scripture, analogy, and usage in favour of the doctrine that certain powers inhere in our primary Church courts, which powers they may exercise either directly, or by commission, subject to the limitations laid down in the constitution.

It was the neglect or oversight of this last qualifying clause that gave rise to most of the objections to the report urged under the second head mentioned above. The power was deemed liable to great abuse, because it was supposed that it was unlimited; that if a presbytery or synod had the right to act by a commission, it would have the right to delegate its whole power to a single member. But no such doctrine was contended for. As the constitution requires that a presbytery should consist of at least three ministers, and a synod of at least seven, it would be a direct violation of that agreement for a presbytery or synod to give presbyterial or synodical powers to any commission consisting of less than a quorum of their own bodies. What would be the use of the provision that not less than three ministers can constitute a presbytery, if those three could meet and devolve their whole power upon a single minister or elder? It is obvious therefore that no commission of a presbytery, if clothed with presbyterial powers can consist of less than a quorum of presbytery; and no commission of synod can constitutionally consist of less than a quorum of that body. This single consideration is an answer to the great majority of the arguments drawn from the supposed liability of the right in question to be abused. Another answer, however, is drawn from experience. The right to act by commission has been exercised by all Presbyterian Churches, and by our own for a long series of years. There is not a single case upon our records of the abuse of this power. There is not a single instance of complaint of injustice, unfairness, or injury arising from this source. The prediction, therefore, of such evils, in the face of an opposing experience so diversified and so long continued, cannot be entitled to much consideration. If the principles of Presbyterianism can be learned from the practice of all Presbyterian Churches, it is most unreasonable to denounce the right in question as anti-Presbyterian. The innovation is all on the other side. The encroachment is on the part of the Assembly, and against the lower courts; if the ground should be assumed by the former that the latter have not a right which from time immemorial they have claimed and exercised.

The strict construction of the constitution for which some of the opponents of the report contended, would, if consistently carried out, effectually tie up the hands of all our Church courts. Where do we find in the constitution the explicit recognition of the right to appoint stated clerks, committees of review, boards of education, of domestic and foreign missions; directors of seminaries, &c., &c.? If our Church courts have no powers but those laid down in the constitution, we shall have to give up all the general institutions of the Church, and many of our most familiar modes of action.

If the right in question were not one clearly recognized in the past history of our Church, and one of real value, it would not be worth contending for. But the single instance of the Synod of Kentucky, in the case of the Cumberland Presbytery, shows that there may be cases, in which it is of the highest importance that this right should be called into exercise. And cases are constantly occurring, in which it is impossible to get a large presbytery, or a whole synod, to devote the time and attention requisite for their due consideration and decision. In such cases, a commission of a third or a fourth of the whole body might be sent to investigate, deliberate and decide, with obvious advantage to all the parties concerned. If the parties are satisfied, the matter ends there. If not, an appeal is open to the appointing body, before whom the matter comes with all the advantage of a previous protracted and careful examination. In this way the ends of justice are better answered, and the time of our Church courts is saved. We are, therefore, glad that the Assembly refused, by indefinitely postponing the whole subject, to sanction the resolution denying to our primary courts the rights in question.

It is proper to mention that the committee, consisting of Drs. Hodge, McFarland, Lindsley, McDowell, and Musgrave, were, with the exception of Dr. Lindsley, unanimous in sanctioning the report submitted to the Assembly.

§ 12. Supervision of Vacant Churches. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. x., sec. viii.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 131, 132.]

The only other point in this report [†] which gave rise to much debate, was that part of the third section of the original report, which declared that no candidate should be admitted to trials for settlement in a vacant congregation independently of the immediate supervision of the presbytery. It was urged on the one hand, that it was the right of

[*From article on "*The General Assembly*;" *Princeton Review*, 1842, p. 481.]

[†Report in regard to "Hasty Ordinations and Unauthorized Demission of the Ministry," adopted by the Assembly of 1842.]

the session of a church to supply its own pulpit, or to invite any licentiate or minister in good standing in our Church to preach for them, without consulting the presbytery; that to deny this right was to introduce patronage into our churches, and to interfere with the liberties of the people. On the other hand, it was maintained that the elders of a vacant church were bound to exercise the right in question in subordination to the presbytery; that they were not an independent body, but a constituent part of an extended organization; and consequently must in all their acts conform to the rules of the Church. As a minister and his session are the spiritual rulers of a parish, and have a right to say who shall and who shall not exercise the office of a teacher to the people submitted to their care; so a presbytery are the spiritual rulers within their bounds, and have the same right with regard to all the churches. The liberties of the people are abundantly provided for by our system. No man can be imposed upon them as a ruler without their consent, or even without their deliberate request. Greater liberty than this they need not desire, and do not, as Presbyterians, possess.

It was further urged that the supervision of the presbytery over the supply of vacant congregations, is expressly recognized in our form of government, as in chapter 18; and was constantly exercised; since nothing was more common than for a vacant congregation to apply to its presbytery for supplies, or for liberty to supply its own pulpit for a definite period. The denial or neglect of this supervision, it was contended, would be the occasion of the greatest disorders. It would effectually nullify all those provisions of our constitution which give to the presbytery authority in the ordination or installation of pastors. For if a man, whom a presbytery could not see its way clear to ordain, was allowed, without their consent, to preach within their bounds, gain ascendency over the minds and affections of the people, the presbytery would be forced, in a multitude of cases, to choose between ordaining a man of whom they disapproved, and the division or secession of the church to which he preached. These were evils of frequent occurrence, and arose from the neglect of the plain principles of our standards.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

§ 1. Commissioners.

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xxii., sects. i. and ii.—*Digest* of 1873, pp. 463, 464, 466–470.]

a. The Assembly Judges the Qualifications of its Members. [*]

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THE second position [taken in the "Review of Leading Measures of the Assembly of 1837, by a member of the New York bar,"] is, that the Assembly has no right to decide whether a commissioner is entitled to his seat or not; that is, it has no right to judge of the qualifications of its own members. Does this mean that the Assembly has no right to decide whether a delegate comes from a body qualified to send him, but is bound to admit him to a seat, no matter where he comes from? This is surely too absurd to be what is meant; and yet this is all the judging of qualification involved in the present case. It is not a question whether a commissioner was duly elected; or whether he himself is what he purports to be, a minister or elder. The question is not about his personal qualification, but about the right of the body giving the commission. Has the Assembly no authority to decide this point? Must it allow any and every man, from Europe, Asia, Africa or America, who may come with a commission, to take his seat as a matter of course? If a man were to rise and say to the moderator, Sir, I hold in my hand a commission from the Presbytery of North Africa; does the Assembly forfeit its existence by telling him, Sir, as we know no such presbytery, we cannot receive you? A cause must surely be desperate that requires such a right to be denied to any representative body upon earth.

It is essential to the existence of the Assembly that it should have the right to decide whether the body giving the commission has authority to do so or not. And from this decision there is no appeal, but to the churches. Should they disapprove of the decision, they will send up delegates the next year who will reverse it. If they sanction it, the aggrieved party has no resource but submission, or revolution.

[* From article reviewing pamphlet named above; *Princeton Review*, 1838, p. 490.]

We must not be understood, however, as admitting that the Assembly has no right to judge of the qualification of delegates from presbyteries in good standing. This Reviewer says, that the commission is the only sufficient evidence of the requisite qualification of the delegate, and must, in all cases, be admitted, as it must be correct, unless the officers of the presbytery certify to "palpable lies." We think this language very incorrect. He forgets how often Congregational laymen have appeared in the Assembly bearing commissions declaring them to be ruling elders. This is certainly very wrong, but we should not like to adopt the language of this writer on the subject. Should a man with such a commission, rise and tell the Assembly that he was not an elder, there can be no question of the right of that body to say to him, then you are not entitled to a seat here. This question, however, except in the form stated above, is not involved in the present case; and we therefore dismiss it.

b. Disputed Elections. [*]

The committee of elections reported in the case of the Rev. David M. Smith, that it appeared to the satisfaction of the committee, that the Presbytery of Columbia failed to form a quorum at the time appointed for their stated spring meeting; that there were present two ministers, and ruling elders from a majority of the churches; that those present requested the Assembly to receive Mr. Smith as their commissioner, in which request two of the absent ministers have expressed their concurrence in writing; and that it is believed the appointment of Mr. Smith would have been unanimous had the presbytery formed a quorum. In view of these facts the Assembly decided that Mr. Smith could not, agreeably to the constitution, be admitted to a seat.

On the one hand, it was urged that the presbytery, being a permanent body, might express its will, if not regularly as to form, at least substantially and effectively, even when not in session; that as the will of the presbytery constituted the essence of a commission, we have in the present case all that is essential; and that the reception of Mr. Smith could afford no precedent for the reception of commissioners when the will of the presbytery appointing them was not satisfactorily known.

On the other hand, it was contended, that although a presbytery is a permanent body, it can only act when in session; that the assent of the several members of our national congress to any legislative measure would have no force, unless that assent was given when the body was regularly convened; that the Assembly had no authority to set aside

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1843, p. 408.]

the express prescriptions of the constitution, and that all precedents which violate important principles are dangerous.

c. Irregular Commissions. [*]

As usual, several delegates appeared without the prescribed documentary evidence of their election. These cases are recorded, as they will have the force of precedents, whatever may be said to the contrary.

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There are always two ways of looking at such cases. Some men are disposed to go by the letter, and others by the spirit of the law. It is the will of the presbytery duly expressed and authenticated, that gives a delegate a right to sit as a member of the Assembly. The book prescribes one definite mode in which the will of the presbytery is to be made known. The strict legal right under the book, therefore, can pertain to those only who have commissions regularly executed. A will is no will in law, unless executed in the prescribed form; but it has full force on the conscience, if there is satisfactory evidence of any kind that it is the real will of the testator. Now, as our courts are not courts of law, but moral tribunals, representing the *animus* of the Church, we think it is clearly obligatory to receive as members those whom we, in our conscience, believe the presbyteries will to be members.

d. Case of an Elder who had ceased to act. [†]

Soon after the organization of the house a question arose involving the right of Dr. Freeman Edson, a ruling elder from the Presbytery of Rochester, to a seat in the Assembly. The case was brought up by an overture from the first Presbyterian Church in Wheatland, N. Y. This communication stated that that church had adopted the plan of annual election of elders; that Dr. Edson's term of service having expired, he was not re-elected (being "unacceptable to the church;") and that the Presbytery of Rochester though apprized of these facts, appointed him a commissioner to the General Assembly. The points disputed were: Is Dr. Edson a ruling member of the Church? and, if this be admitted, had he a right under these circumstances, to a seat in the house? The committee to which the case was referred, reported in the negative on both these points, asserting that the election of an elder for a limited time was invalid; and that Dr. Edson having ceased to act as an elder, because unacceptable to the Church, was not eligible

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1853, p. 451.]

[† From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic; "*Right of Dr. Edson to his seat;*" *Princeton Review*, 1835, p. 443.]

as a commissioner. This report after debate was re-committed to the same committee, Drs. Ely and Junkin being added to their number. The second report of the committee admitted the validity of Dr. Edson's election and ordination as an elder, but denied his right to a seat, because he was not an acting elder in the congregation to which he belonged. Dr. Ely, as the minority of the committee, presented a counter report.

The house seems very soon to have arrived at unanimity on the first point, viz.: that Dr. Edson having been elected and ordained as a ruling elder, he was to be recognized as such, and that neither the irregularity of his election, nor the fact of his having ceased to exercise his office in a particular church could invalidate his ordination. On the second point, viz.: the right of a man who is not an acting elder in some congregation to a seat in the Assembly, the debate was more protracted. It was argued in defence of this right, 1. That ceasing to act as an elder in any particular congregation could not deprive a man of the other functions of his office. What is an elder under our constitution, but a man entitled to rule, when requested, as a member of a session, or when appointed, as a member of presbytery, synod or General Assembly? His not having been invited to rule in a session cannot invalidate his right to rule, when properly called upon, in other judicatories. The right to rule is incident to his eldership and must continue as long as the office continues. 2. That this principle was sanctioned by precedent; elders who had ceased to act as such having often been admitted to a seat in the Assembly. 3. That it would have all the injustice of an *ex post facto* law now to deprive a presbytery of one of its representatives on this ground. 4. That this rule, if applicable to elders, must be applied also to ministers, and lead to the exclusion from the house of all ministers who were not pastors.

On the other side it was argued, 1. That elders are representatives of the people, and that sending up elders who are not rulers in some congregation, is divesting the lay delegation of its character as a representation of the people. 2. That the perpetuity of the office of an elder only means that a man once ordained as an elder may be recalled to the eldership in the same or another congregation without being reordained. 3. That the cases of ministers and elders are not parallel, inasmuch as the former, although they cannot become pastors without the consent of the people, may yet, according to our system, be ordained and made members of a presbytery, without any previous election to a particular charge. After several protracted sessions, the debate was finally terminated by Dr. Miller proposing the following substitute for the committee's report, which substitute was adopted by a nearly unanimous vote:

The committee to whom was referred overture No. 1, a communication from the session of Wheatland congregation, in reference to the appointment of Freeman Edson as a commissioner to this Assembly, beg leave to present the following report, viz., Agreeably to the constitution of our Church the office of ruling elder is perpetual, (see *Form of Gov.* ch. 13. § 6.) and cannot be laid aside by the will of the individual called to that office, nor can any congregation form rules which would make it lawful for any one to lay it aside. Your committee are of opinion that the mode of electing elders in the congregation of Wheatland for a term of years, was irregular, and ought in future to be abandoned; but cannot invalidate the ordination of persons thus elected and ordained to the office of ruling elder.

And whereas it appears that Mr. Freeman Edson was once elected to the office of ruling elder in the church of Wheatland, and was regularly set apart to that office; whereas there seems to be some material diversity of views between the Presbytery of Rochester and the Church session to which Mr. Edson once belonged, as to the manner in which, and the principle on which he ceased to be an acting elder in the said church, into which the Assembly have no opportunity at present of regularly examining, and whereas the presbytery, with a distinct knowledge, as is alleged, of all the circumstances attending the case, gave Mr. Edson a regular commission as a ruling elder to this General Assembly; therefore *Resolved*, That he retain his seat as a member of the Assembly.

e. Commissioners Excluded Pending Investigation. [*]

[*Form of Government*, chap. xii., sec. vii.—*Digest* of 1873, pp. 332, 525.]

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Chap. 12, § 7, of the Form of Government reads: "The General Assembly shall meet at least once a year. On the day appointed for the purpose, the moderator of the last Assembly, if present, shall open the meeting with a sermon, and preside until a new moderator be chosen. No commissioner shall have a right to deliberate or vote in the Assembly until his name shall have been enrolled by the clerk, and his commission examined and filed among the papers of the Assembly." In order then to a proper organization, it is necessary that the moderator of the last Assembly, if present, should preside, until a new moderator is appointed; and secondly, that the commissions of the delegates should be examined and their names enrolled by the clerk. The constitution formerly directed that the commissions should "be publicly read;" but in 1827 the presbyteries sanctioned the striking out of those words, and the insertion of the word "examined" in their place. It was then adopted as a standing rule that the moderator should, immediately after the house was constituted with prayer, appoint a committee of commissions, to whom the commissions were to be delivered; and the Assembly was then to have a recess to allow the committee time to perform this duty and to make out the roll See p. 40 of the Min. for 1826. In the year 1829, however, it was resolved

[*From Article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1838, p. 491.]

that the permanent and stated clerks be a standing committee of commissions, to whom the commissions were to be delivered for examination before the opening of the Assembly. See Min. for 1829, p. 384. These clerks are therefore entrusted by the constitution, by the standing rules, and the uniform practice of the house, with the formation of the roll. They are to report the names of those whose commissions are unobjectionable, who "immediately take their seats as members;" and they must further report on those commissions which are "materially incorrect" or "otherwise objectionable." See Min. for 1826, p. 39. The house is then to determine, whether the persons bearing such commissions are entitled to their seats or not. It was therefore in obedience to the constitution that Dr. Elliott, the moderator of the Assembly of 1837, took the chair, and presided until a new moderator was chosen. He decided with obvious propriety that the first business was the report of the standing committee of commissions on the roll. This decision was submitted to. The regular course of proceeding was continued by the call, on the part of the moderator, for any other commissions which might be in the house. These were to be handed to the committee, examined, and if found regular, the delegates presenting them were to be enrolled, and take their seats. When this was done, and not before, those commissions which were incorrect, or on any ground objectionable, were to be taken into consideration, and the house were to decide whether those who bore them were entitled to a seat or not. This is not only the uniform and constitutional mode of proceeding, but it is obviously proper and necessary. Until the roll is so far completed as to include the names of all the delegates present whose commissions are unquestioned, there is no house legally constituted; those who have a right to deliberate and vote are not legally ascertained. Until this process therefore was gone through with, the claims of those whose commissions had been rejected by the clerks could not be legally considered or decided upon. It was right then, when the moderator called for commissions, for Dr. Mason to rise and present those which he actually offered; and it was right in Mr. Squire to present his own. It was however obviously correct, on the part of the moderator, to say to these gentlemen, that as the clerks have rejected these commissions, the question whether they are to be received or not cannot be submitted to the house, until the house be ascertained; until it is known who are entitled to deliberate and vote upon the question.

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However improper the conduct of the clerks may have been, the house was not responsible for it until they sanctioned it. The Assem-

bly had no official information of the ground of the rejection. They might have disapproved of it, and admitted the commissioners to their seats. The decision of the clerks is not the decision of the house; it merely suspends the right of the member until the house has decided on his claim.

It may be said that this view of the case gives the clerks a very dangerous power. It is a sufficient answer to this objection, that it is a power given by the constitution; and that it is one which they have always been permitted to exercise. Every year there are commissioners whose names the clerks refuse to enroll; and their decision is considered final until the house has considered and determined on the subject. Besides, this power is guarded from abuse, as far as the case admits of it. From the decision of the clerk, refusing to enroll a member, an appeal lies to the Assembly; and if the Assembly refuse to receive him, there is, in most cases, no redress. If the ground of this refusal be the irregularity of the commission, the presbytery suffers from the negligence of its officers. If the ground is the want of proper authority in the body giving the commission, there is a further appeal to the churches; or it may be, to the civil courts.

It is further objected that the right "of a commissioner to deliberate and vote was perfect the moment he presented his commision to the clerk for the purpose of having his name enrolled;" and the decision of the supreme court in the case of *Marbury* vs. *Madison* is appealed to in support of this position.

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We deny, however, the position itself. It matters not how the general principle on which it is founded may be decided; our constitution declares that the presentation of the commission is not enough. Before a delegate can deliberate and vote, his name must be enrolled by the clerk; until this is done, the right, however perfect it may be, is not legally ascertained or established.

f. Reduction of Representation. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xii., sec. ii.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 211, 212.]

The propriety of altering the ratio of representation, so as to reduce the number of delegates forming the General Assembly, has been agitated for some time, and during the last year it has been freely discussed in our periodicals. The subject was brought before the Assembly by memorials from the Presbyteries of Greenbrier and Western District,

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*;" same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1847, p. 397.]

asking the Assembly to overture to the presbyteries the expediency of reducing the ratio of representation; and also from the Presbytery of Zanesville, proposing to adopt the plan of synodical instead of presbyterial delegations. The Committee of Bills and Overtures returned these memorials to the house, recommending the following resolution, which was adopted, viz:

"*Resolved*, That it is not expedient to refer to the presbyteries any measure, having for its object the alteration of the existing ratio of representation."

From the small degree of interest excited by this subject in the Assembly, and from the strength of the vote on its rejection, we are led to infer that only a few individuals in our Church sympathize with the agitation kept up in the papers during the last year. There appear to be three principal reasons for desiring the proposed change.

1. It is urged that our General Assembly, as now constituted, is too large for the transaction of business in a way at once deliberate and expeditious. In an Assembly composed of so many individuals trained to public speaking, there will always be a large number anxious to deliver their views on every leading question. If all who wish to speak are fully heard, it consumes an inordinate amount of time; and if the liberty of speech is restricted, it leads to confusion and dissatisfaction. And besides, the time of the house is often taken up by speeches on unimportant questions, while the real business is left to be hurried through, in the closing hours of the session, with a precipitancy which forbids deliberation, and endangers the wisdom of the decisions.

These are doubtless real evils; but it is urged in reply, that the proposed measure would have no tendency to obviate or abate them. All the experience of deliberative bodies goes to show that no reduction in the number of members would have the effect of diminishing the amount of speaking, unless it were carried to a point that would entirely defeat the whole principle of representation in the Assembly. Upon every question about which there is a diversity of views at all, there will be found in every such body, however small it might be made, persons representing every shade of opinion, and therefore anxious to express their opinions. Debates are terminated, not by the exhaustion of speakers, but the exhaustion of opinions and arguments on the one side, and the exhaustion of patience on the other. Now experience proves that this exhaustion takes place sooner in a very large body, than in a moderately small one. The speaking in the former case, being mostly confined to a few of the ablest members of the body, is soon done up, and the majority refuses to hear any

more. Hence there is less speaking in the British House of Commons, made up of more than six hundred members, upon great public questions, than there would be in the House of Representatives of any State in this Union, composed of one-sixth of the number.

The evils arising from the undue consumption of time by speeches seem to be inherent and incurable; at least they are incurable by any reduction of representation compatible with the character of the Assembly.

2. A second and more plausible argument for the proposed measure, is drawn from *the expense* of assembling so large a body from every part of the United States.

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And it happens, further, from the necessities of the case, that this tax falls heaviest upon the remote and less wealthy parts of the Church.

That this is felt to be a severe grievance is manifest, from the warmth of the debate which sprang up incidentally, about the distribution of the monies collected and reported for the Commissioner's Fund. It appears that some of the richer presbyteries first pay the expenses of their delegates, and merely transfer any balance that may remain to the general fund. The effect of this, of course, is to diminish the dividend available for the other members. Cases of difficulty and hardship, and even injustice are liable to arise out of this arrangement. But the obvious answer to all this, as an argument for reducing the delegation is, that in the first place, these evils may easily be cured by more ample and equal provision on the part of the Church at large, to meet the expenses of those whom she delegates to transact her business; and in the second place, that they would not be met by a reduction of the delegation. The most natural result of this measure would be, a corresponding reduction in the amount of the contributions to the fund. If any one will cast his eye over the statistical table, he will see at once, that the contributions to this fund are graduated not at all by the means of the churches, but simply by their estimate of its necessities. The present inadequacy of this fund ought to be held up before the churches until it is seen and felt; and no one can doubt that there is abundant means to supply the deficiency. The way to remedy the evil, is not by discussions and resolutions in the Assembly, but by spreading information, and calling to it the attention of the churches.

If the question be whether the necessary expenses of the present delegation to the Assembly are wisely laid out, or in other words, whether it is worth to the Church what it costs, we take for granted, no one would hesitate to give an affirmative answer. For in the first place it is clear that the contributions for this purpose, do not, in the least, di-

minish those made for benevolent purposes, or other ecclesiastical objects. This has been settled long ago in the experience of the Church. And in the second place, the obvious advantages arising from the association of the members of the Assembly, and the impressions received from the various exercises and doings of the body, immeasurably outweigh the comparatively trifling expense of its annual assemblage.

3. The third argument for the reduction of the Assembly is that it vacates unnecessarily for several weeks, so many pulpits. To this it may be answered, 1. That most of the pulpits are not necessarily, or in fact, vacant at least for the whole time. In almost every place some supplies can be procured in the absence of the pastor, either by licentiates, or unemployed or transient ministers. 2. It is often a great relief to the minister to escape for a little while from the steady pressure of pastoral care and labor, to recruit his health, unbend his mind, and refresh his spirits by pleasant intercourse with his brethren. And, of course, the people also get the full benefit of this invigorating process, on the part of their pastor. 3. Even if there were no incidental considerations of this sort, the temporary vacancy of a few churches would be nothing, in comparison with the advantages arising from the greater wisdom and weight of the Assembly as now constituted. Any material reduction in its numbers, (and to be effective it must be material,) would not only endanger the principle of adequate representation, but essentially diminish that moral power, both conservative and efficient, which is now one of its principal functions.

§ 2. Manner of Conducting Business. [*]

[*Form of Gov.* chap. xii., sec. 1.]

There appears to be a great infelicity in the manner in which the Assembly conducts its business. Everything is fragmentary. A subject is introduced one day, and partially discussed, then laid aside for something else; then resumed, and again and again laid aside. Thus the judicial case Number 1, was introduced during the first days of the sessions, and not decided before the very last days. We have known a member to be four days in delivering a speech, which would not have taken an hour, if delivered continuously; but which, being broken into fragments of ten or twenty minutes, was protracted to an insufferable length, greatly to the detriment of its effect, and to the speaker's annoyance. It is evident that this is a great evil, especially in judicial cases. The minds of the members are distracted, and the whole subject gets confused. Some hear one part, and others another part of the

[* From article on "*General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1863, p. 498.]

evidence or argument. All this may be avoided, if, instead of making particular matters of business the order of the day for a specified time, the Assembly should determine simply the order in which the several items on the docket shall be taken up. It might determine to take up the reports of the several Boards, and dispatch each before taking up anything else. Then take up, say a judicial case, and hear it to the end, before any other topic is introduced.

The business of the Assembly consists, besides matters of routine, of three great divisions—reports of the Boards, judicial cases, and the consideration of overtures. There might be some advantage in taking up these subjects in their order; but, at any rate, it seems to us eminently desirable, that when any one important subject is introduced, it should be finally determined before it is laid aside.

§ 3. Power to Act by Commission. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xii., sec. v.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 564.]

Dr. Lacy, from the Judicial Committee, reported on the resolution offered by Dr. Wines, instructing the Judiciary Committee to consider some action looking to the relief of the General Assembly in judicial cases, either the appointment of a commission to hear and issue such cases, or the adoption of an overture to be sent down to the presbyteries, or some other plan.

In regard to the first suggestion, the committee reported it unconstitutional, and the second inexpedient; which conclusions the report argued at some length, and further reported by a small majority that it was inexpedient to attempt any change.

Judge Fine submitted a minority report favouring an amendment in the constitution, and proposing an overture to be sent down to the Presbyteries, asking—Shall the constitution be so amended as to terminate all judicial cases originating in Church sessions in the synod, and all originating in presbyteries, in the General Assembly?

When the subject came up for discussion, Dr. Wines moved a resolution declaring that so much of the report of the committee as pronounced the appointment of a commission by the Assembly, unconstitutional, be not approved. His argument in support of this resolution embraced the following points.

1. The General Assembly is a representative body, and does not act from powers original and primary. Its powers are not so extensive as those of the old synod, which was a meeting of all presbyteries in one body. "The General Assembly is vested only with defined powers, which it cannot enlarge without the original constituencies—the Presbyteries."

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*," topic, "Commissions;" *Princeton Review*, 1855, p. 502.]

This is a very common theory, but in our opinion an erroneous one, with respect to our constitution. All legitimate Church courts act from inherent primary powers. Neither session, presbytery, synod, nor Assembly derives its powers from the constitution. The constitution is of the nature of a treaty, or compact between different portions of the Church, as to the way in which their inherent powers may be exercised. If a presbytery may ordain, or try a minister, what is to hinder a synod or a General Assembly doing so? Nothing in the world but an agreement that they will not exercise these powers. All Church councils representing the Church, are vested with all Church power. A presbytery may do all that a session may do; a synod can do all that a presbytery or session can do; and the General Assembly can do all that a synod, presbytery or session can do —except so far as their hands are tied by a written agreement. Even a presbytery can exercise its inherent powers only according to the prescriptions of the constitution. It is not the true theory of our government, therefore, that the General Assembly has only delegated powers. It has all Church power, legislative, judicial and executive—though the exercise of these powers, as in the case of the presbytery, is limited and guided by a written constitution; and therefore it is true that our Assembly, under the limitation of the constitution, has not the powers of the original Synod, of which it is the successor. Still the distinction here stated is one of importance. Much depends on the question, whether our constitution is a grant, or a limitation of powers.

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So far as we can judge from the reports of the debates, the objections to the appointment of a commission for judicial cases, were not urged with the plausibility and force with which they were presented last year by Chancellor Johns and Dr. McMasters. The great objection then urged was, that a court could not delegate its powers. What would be thought, it was asked, of the Supreme Court of the United States, if that venerable body should delegate its functions to a part of its members? The answer to this objection is, that there is no delegation of powers involved in the appointment of a commission. A quorum of a presbytery, no matter how large the presbytery may be, is the presbytery; a quorum of a synod is the synod, and a quorum of the Assembly is the Assembly. In like manner, inasmuch as a commission must embrace at least a quorum of the appointing body, a commission of a presbytery is the presbytery, a commission of the synod is the synod, and a commission of the Assembly is the As-

sembly. A commission, therefore, is not of the nature of a committee with powers, but it is the appointing body itself, adjourned to meet at a certain time and place, for the transaction of a specific business—with the understanding expressed or implied, that while the whole body may convene, certain members are required to attend. When a candidate for the ministry is to be ordained, A B are appointed to take part in the exercises. It is understood that any member may be present, but in point of fact, few beyond those named are generally convened. They are the presbytery, whether any other member is present or not; and they act as such. In many cases, they examine the candidate, they judge of his qualifications and orthodoxy, they decide whether he shall be ordained or not, and if the way be clear, they ordain him. Does any body cry out against this, as a delegation of powers? or against three or four men being trusted to exercise the functions of a body consisting it may be of eighty or a hundred members? In England, the house of Lords is the court of ultimate appeal in judicial cases. When they have transacted their ordinary business, they adjourn to meet in their judicial capacity for the trial of causes, but it is with the understanding that none need attend but the law-Lords; and, in point of fact, few others ever do attend. What constitutional principle, then, forbids a presbytery or synod, when their ordinary business is transacted adjourning to meet for the trial of a judicial case, with the understanding, that, (as in the case of an ordination,) while the whole body may convene, certain specified members are obligated to attend? It may, however, be objected, that the presbytery and synods are permanent bodies, and the Assembly is an annual one, and is dissolved and not adjourned. The Assembly, however, may sit a whole year. It may sit a month, and then adjourn to meet at any time within the year it may see fit to appoint. We are, therefore, unable to see any constitutional objection to the appointment of a judicial commission. It is well known that our ecclesiastical courts have often appointed such bodies, and that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland annually appoints a commission, to which all unfinished business is referred. It is said that this is because the session of that body is limited by law to ten days. This, however, does not apply to the Free Church. Besides, what difference does it make? If it is anti-presbyterial to act by a commission, the law of the State cannot make it presbyterial. It is no presumption, therefore, to say that a mode of action which has been adopted for centuries by the most stringent and influential Presbyterian Church in the world, of its own free will, is not inconsistent with the principles of Presbyterianism.

It is, therefore, a mere question of expediency. Something must be done to relieve the Assembly of the pressure of judicial cases. To

make appeals stop with the synod, violates an essential principle of our system, and must tend to the dissolution of the Church. The appointment of a commission is a long tried and approved method of relief, and we hope it will be ultimately adopted, not only by the Assembly, but by synods and presbyteries.

It is said, that probably not more than forty members would attend a commission of the Assembly, and then we should have a body not more than one-half as large as an ordinary Synod, acting as the supreme judicatory of the Church—with its two thousand ministers and two hundred thousand communicants. It is said also, that if the decisions of such a body were not to be reviewed, its power would be alarming, and if reviewed, it would be of no use. It is further said, the Church would have no confidence in the judgment of such a body. It is evident that these objections are addressed to the imagination, and not to the understanding. Fourteen members are a quorum of the Assembly, and may constitutionally act as the supreme judicatory of the Church. Seven members are a quorum of a synod, and may act for the whole body. Three are a quorum of a presbytery, even if it consists of an hundred members. The United States' Court consists of some eight or ten judges, and lays down the law for twenty millions of freemen. A dozen law-Lords make decisions affecting all the subjects of Great Britain. It is a mere chimera, that a commission would be a *monstrum horrendum*. Respect and confidence follow competency and fidelity, not numbers.

§ 4. Decisions and Deliverances on Doctrines.

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xii., sec. v.; *Digest* of 1873, p. 218 ff.]

a. General Remark. [*]

We cannot refrain from making a remark on the extreme delicacy of calling on deliberative bodies, and especially on the highest judicatories of a Church to affirm or deny doctrinal propositions. It would be well to remember with what sedulous care and frequent debate and comparison of views the Westminster Assembly revised and determined on the language employed in our standards. Luther and the other Wittemberg divines, when called upon to furnish the diet with a brief statement of the points of agreement and difference between them and the Romanists, utterly refused on the ground that it was too difficult and serious a matter to be done in a few days, which was all the time which

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1837, foot note to page 411.

could then be commanded. We see, however, that in our Assembly no hesitation is felt in moving on the spot, that such and such doctrinal propositions be approved or condemned.

b. Testimony against Erroneous Publications. [*]

The second resolution on the [*Pittsburgh*] *Memorial* declares it to be the right of the judicatories of the Presbyterian Church to bear testimony against erroneous publications, whether the author be a member of the judicatory passing sentence or not. This resolution was opposed on the following grounds:

1. On account of peculiar and embarrassed phraseology, and its blending subjects very different from each other. The case of a book published in a foreign country, or by an author not connected with the Presbyterian Church, is very different from that of a book published by a member of our own judicatories, and with his name attached to it. There can be no objection to any body warning those under its care against a book likely to do them harm, whose author was not amenable to them in any way; but the case is very different when the author is under the control of that body. The resolution reaches both classes of such cases. 2. It is inconsistent with our book of discipline, and with the universally recognized principles of justice and brotherly love. Because it is to all intents and purposes a trial of the author without an accuser, without the liberty of explanation and defence. It is a condemnation of a man first, and the trial of him afterwards. He is thus deprived of all chance of a fair hearing. A minister may be arraigned before his own presbytery, on the ground of a certain publication, and, while the cause is pending, a superior judicatory to which this very case may be brought by appeal, may be called upon to decide it in the abstract; thus prejudicing his cause in the court below, and prejudging in the court above. Is this justice? It is inconsistent also with the tenderness due to a brother's character and usefulness, to pronounce his book erroneous or injurious, without giving him the opportunity of explanation or defence. 3. The mode of proceeding sanctioned by the resolution is unnecessary. The constitution points out another and fairer way of reaching the case. If a man has published heresy, let him be arraigned and have a fair trial. In this way, if his book is erroneous, it can be condemned and the people warned. 4. Such condemnations of books may do more harm than good, by increasing their notoriety and extending their circulation.

The resolution was supported on the following grounds: 1. It was denied that the trial and condemnation of a book was a trial and condemnation of the author. The opinion expressed upon the book might be given by a presbytery to which the author was not amenable, and could not prejudice his having a fair trial before his own body. The opinion did not affect his standing or rights; his liberty to explain and defend his sentiments was not impaired. 2. There are two different

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic, "*Pittsburgh Memorial;*" *Princeton Review*, 1835, p. 469.]

methods by which our judicatories may operate to correct the evils arising from erroneous books; the one is by disciplining their authors, the other examining and condemning the books themselves. Sometimes justice and propriety may demand the one course and sometimes the other. Because a judicatory may sometimes adopt the latter course, when it should have adopted the former, is no reason why the latter should be in all cases prohibited, because there are many cases in which it is the only proper or practicable method of meeting the evil. A book published in a distant part of the country may be circulating within the bounds of a particular presbytery and doing much injury. They certainly have a right to express their opinion of the work, without waiting until the presbytery to which the author belongs think proper to call him to an account. Or, supposing that the author's presbytery thinks there is nothing seriously erroneous in the book, are all other presbyteries, though they may think very differently, to be forced to allow it to circulate among them without the power of saying a word on the subject? Again, the sentiments of a book may be erroneous and yet not heretical, or the author may by his explanations satisfy those concerned that *he* does not hold the errors which his book may, in the judgment of others, inculcate. A tract in defence of slavery, or of Church establishments, or against temperance societies, or voluntary associations, might be so written as to do much evil, without perhaps justly subjecting their authors to ecclesiastical censure. Against such publications, or any other which they deem injurious, Church courts have a right to protest, and to warn their people. All that the resolution asserts is the right. That it may be unwisely or unkindly exercised no one doubts, but this does not invalidate the right itself.—3. This right has ever been claimed and exercised in the Church. In the constitution, chap. 10, sect. 8, it is expressly stated, that among the powers of the presbytery is that of condemning "erroneous opinions, which injure the purity or peace of the Church." The import of this declaration is rendered perfectly plain by the reference, in support of this right, to Acts xv. 22–24. That passage does not contain an example of the disciplining of a heretic, but of the condemnation of an erroneous opinion in the abstract. The council at Jerusalem pronounced the opinion of the false brethren, who had crept in unawares, to be erroneous and injurious. The General Assembly itself once appointed a committee to examine a certain book, (Davis's Gospel Plan) and the report of that committee condemned it, and then directed the presbytery to proceed against its author. See Digest, p. 144, [Digest of 1873, p. 222.] Not only in the Presbyterian Church, but in all ages and parts of the Christian world, ecclesiastical bodies have, from time to time, warned the people against erroneous publications—4.

There is little danger of this power being abused. The danger is rather on the other side. In this age and country at least, the evil is that the Church is disposed too much to overlook both books and men who teach erroneous doctrines.

The resolution was carried.

c. *Church Commentary on the Bible.* [*]

Dr. Breckinridge offered a minute to provide a Commentary on the Scriptures which shall be in accordance with the Westminster doctrines of this Church, as follows:

Inasmuch as the want of a sound, godly, and thorough commentary on the whole word of God, composed in the sense of the constant faith of the Church of God, as that is briefly set forth in the standard of the Westminster Assembly, held by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, has long been felt to be a grievous want, whereby a great lack of due service to God and to his truth occurs, and whereby constant danger arises to men of needless ignorance on one side, and of dangerous misguidance on the other, therefore be it

Resolved, By the General Assembly, that the Board of Publication shall, and it is hereby directed to proceed with all convenient despatch to have such a commentary composed, prepared for the press and published. And in the execution of this great work, the following rules and orders, together with such further as may be adopted from time to time by the General Assembly, shall be carefully observed by the Board of Publication, and by all others in any ways engaged in the execution of any part thereof.

1. The commentary shall be prepared exclusively by the members of this Church, and in the preparing of it they shall have all such indulgence as to time as they shall respectively demand. And for their own compensation and their heirs, shall receive, for the legal term of twenty-eight years, a fair *per centum* on the price of the work sold, which shall be settled in advance by the Board of Publication, and which shall be uniform, and in lieu of all claims and cost of every sort in any way connected with their said work.

2. The said commentary shall be fitted for common use by all men, and in the preparation of it free use may be made of all material that may exist; the design being to procure not so much what may be original, as what may be best in the way of enlightening and saving men. It shall not be prolix, but so arranged that the whole may be embraced in five or six royal octavo volumes, of good print, containing, besides commentary, the English text in full, together with the usual accessories thereof, and such other suitable helps to its understanding as plain people need. And the text used in it shall be strictly that of the version prepared by the translators appointed by James the First, King of England.

3. In order to secure the fittest men for this great work, the Board of Publication shall make special application to the general synods of our Church at the next stated meetings respectively, and the said synods shall, upon careful consideration, nominate to the said Board of Publication any number of their own mem-

[*From article on "*The General Assembly;*" same topic. *Princeton Review*, 1858; p. 559.]

bers, not to exceed five from any one synod, of such as they shall consider qualified to undertake the work, and the Board of Publication may add not more than four, in addition to the whole number thus nominated to it, and it shall communicate the list of names thus obtained by sifting the Church, to the General Assembly, at its next stated meeting in May of next year, making, at the same time, and from year to year thereafter, report of its doings under and by virtue of this minute.

4. The General Assembly of 1859 will take such further order in the premises, especially with regard to selection of persons out of the list communicated to it, to the distribution of the work amongst them, and to all things needful for its effectual prosecution, as shall seem most expedient.

It is evident, from the very nature of this proposal, as well as from the arguments of its advocates, that it contemplates an exposition of the whole Scripture, to which shall be given the sanction of Church authority. If the mere suggestion of such an idea does not strike a man dumb with awe, he must be impervious to all argument. It is a fearful thing to give Church authority even to articles of faith gathered from the general sense of Scripture. How large a part of the Church universal, or even of the Church of England, can conscientiously adopt the Thirty-Nine Articles in their true sense? How do we get along with our more extended Confession? We could not hold together a week, if we made the adoption of all its propositions a condition of ministerial communion. How is it with the marriage question? If it is not only difficult but impossible to frame a creed as extended as the Westminster Confession, which can be adopted in all its details by the ministry of any large body of Christians, what shall we say to giving the sanction of the Church to a given interpretation of every passage of Scripture? This is more than all the popes, who ever lived, merged in one, would dare to propose. It is a thousand fold more than Rome, when most drunk with pride, ever ventured to attempt. Where is there such a thing? who has ever heard of such a thing as a Church Commentary? There must be some mistake about this matter. The proposition cannot mean what it appears to mean, and what some at least, both of its advocates and opponents, understood it to mean. We cannot persuade ourselves that any one, having the least idea of the nature of the work, any apprehension of what it is, to come to a clear conviction, even for oneself, what is the true interpretation of thousands of texts of Scripture, how many questions of philology, of grammar, of logic, of geography, history, antiquities, of the analogy of faith and of Scripture, which such decision involves, could, for a moment, dream of the possibility of a Church exposition of the whole Bible. The proposal on the part of any man, or any body of men, to give an authoritative interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy, of the visions of Ezekiel, Zechariah, Daniel, and John, would be proof that God had given him

or them up to strong delusion. No amount of inspiration ever granted to man would justify such an assumption. The prophets themselves did not understand their own predictions. The apostles, though rendered infallible in what they taught, were as ignorant, it may be, as other men of what they did not teach. The Scriptures were as much an unfathomable sea of Divine knowledge to them as they are to us.

It will no doubt be said, that the view above given of the design of the proposed commentary is exaggerated and distorted. It is very probable that the proposition lies in the minds of its advocates in a very different form from that which it presents to others. We are speaking of it as it lies in the record, and as it was exhibited in the speeches of those who urged its adoption. Some may say that there is no great harm in the Board of Publication publishing a commentary on the Bible. Certainly not, and simply because the Board of Publication is not the Church, and therefore no special authority belongs to any of their publications. They may print the commentaries of Henry or Scott, or Dr. Jacobus's Notes on the Gospel, with impunity, because no one is responsible for the correctness of the expositions given but their authors. Who ever dreams that the Church is responsible for Dr. Scott's interpretation of Ezekiel's wheels? Who thinks of attributing Church authority to Dr. Jacobus's exposition of our Lord's discourses? These works pass for what they are intrinsically worth, and for no more. But here it is proposed to pursue the same course in making a commentary, as was adopted in making our Catechisms and compiling our Hymn Book. The Church, as such, is responsible for the doctrinal correctness of every hymn in the collection. The people do not know who were the writers or who the compilers. They take the book on the authority of the Church, and the Church is fully committed to its correctness. This must be the case in regard to any commentary written by men selected and appointed by the Church, reporting their work from time to time, as they proceed, and receiving as essential the imprimatur of the Church to what they write. This of necessity commits the Church; and this purpose was clearly avowed. It was said that the Westminster Confession has a sense, and the Church has a clear conviction of what that sense is; and according to these principles the commentary is to be constructed. That is, the Church is to see to it, that the commentary is orthodox and correct; therefore the Church must be responsible. When this commentary is quoted in controversy, it will come not with the authority of Luther, or Calvin, or Scott, or Jacobus, but of the Presbyterian Church. All Presbyterians will go to it, not as to the other publications of the Board, written by private individuals, but as to a book having authority, as being written or compiled by the Church. The plan proposed is much the

same as that pursued by our Baptist friends in the preparation of their new version. If that work should be completed, it will be the Baptist version, not Dr. Conant's or Professor Hackett's version, but the Baptist version—one to which the Baptists as a denomination stand committed. So the proposed commentary will be the Presbyterian commentary, not the commentary of Mr. A. or of Dr. B., and it must of necessity be clothed with Church authority. This was evidently contemplated by those who urged that the exposition of Scripture should be kept under the vigilant eye of the Church, and who pleaded the promise of the Holy Spirit to the Church as a reason why the work should not be referred to the Board of Publication, but decided upon and carried out by the Church itself, the Board being only her agent, as in the preparation of the Hymn Book. This is a fatal objection to the whole scheme, for the Church will never submit, unless God has withdrawn from her the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind, to have imposed upon her the interpretations of any man, as of authority in the reading of the Scriptures.

Besides this, the object aimed at is not only inconsistent with the liberty of believing, but it is utterly impracticable. It is said the Bible is to be interpreted according to the Church's sense of the Westminster Confession. But who is to tell us the Church's sense of the Confession? It is notorious, that as to that point we are not agreed. In the second place, even as to points in which the sense of the Confession is plain, there is want of entire concurrence in its reception; and what is the main point, there is no such thing as the sense of the Westminster Confession as to the true interpretation of thousands of passages of Scripture. The standard is an imaginary one. What does that Confession teach of the dark sayings of Hosea, of the baptism for the dead, or the sense of Gal. iii. 20, concerning which an octavo volume has been written, giving no less than one hundred and fifty distinct interpretations? It is plain that there is not, and that there cannot be a standard for the interpretation of the Scriptures in detail; and therefore the Church must either submit to have the opinions of some one man enacted into the laws to bind the reason and conscience of all other men, or she must give up the idea of having a Church exposition of the Bible.

Admitting, however, that such a work is desirable, and that it is practicable, where are the men to be found to execute the task? It is proposed that each synod should nominate five of its own members for the work, some one hundred and sixty in all. We venture to say, that instead of our Church being able to furnish a hundred men fit for such a work as this, it does not contain, and never has contained, any one such man. It is bad enough for any poor sinner, after all his

study, to undertake to present his own private judgment as to the meaning of Scripture, and to state the reasons for his opinion, leaving all other men to judge for themselves, to receive or reject his interpretation as they may see fit. But to assume to act as the mouthpiece of the Church in this matter, to say what the Church believes as to the meaning of each text of Scripture, and what all its members, therefore, are bound to receive as its meaning, is a task which none but an idiot or an angel would dare to undertake.

§ 5. Superintendence.

[*Form of Government*, chap. xii., sec. v.]

a. Disposal of the Members of a Dissolved Presbytery. [*]

[Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 263.]

Resolutions were introduced in relation to the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia, which, as modified by the mover, were adopted in the following form, viz.

"Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,

"1. That the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia be, and it hereby is, dissolved.

"2. The territory embraced in this presbytery is re-annexed to those to which it respectively appertained before its creation. Its stated clerk is directed to deposit all their records, and other papers, in the hands of the stated clerk of the Synod of Philadelphia, on or before the first day of the sessions of that synod, at its first meeting after this Assembly adjourns.

"3. The candidates and Foreign Missionaries of the *Third Presbytery of Philadelphia* are hereby attached to the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

"4. The ministers, churches, and licentiates in the presbytery hereby dissolved are directed to apply without delay to the presbyteries to which they most naturally belong, for admission into them. And upon application being so made, by any duly organized Presbyterian church, it shall be received.

"5. These resolutions shall be in force from and after the final adjournment of the present sessions of this General Assembly."

Yeas 70, nays 60.

These resolutions were advocated on the ground of the unconstitutionality of the act of the Assembly by which this presbytery was constituted, and of the evils which had resulted, and were likely still farther to result from its existence in its present form.

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We do not question the right of the Assembly to act in this case, and to dissolve the presbytery which they themselves had formed, but

[* From Article on "*The General Assembly*," *Princeton Review*, 1835, p. 476.]

we cannot see the propriety of the manner in which it was done. It was said, that the Assembly has no authority to attach any minister to a presbytery without its consent. This, as a general rule, may be true. But in those cases in which the Assembly undertakes to assign limits to presbyteries, or to constitute or dissolve such bodies, they must determine who shall and who shall not belong to them. The great difficulty arises from the anomalous position in which this act places the members of this presbytery. By the act of dissolution their presbytery ceases to exist. They are then members of no presbytery, and yet Presbyterian ministers. They are indeed directed to apply for admission into the presbyteries to which they most naturally belong. Suppose, however, these bodies refuse to receive them. In what condition are they then? Are they in or out of the Presbyterian Church? Is a minister turned out of the Church by the refusal of a particular presbytery to receive him? This cannot be assumed as a constitutional mode of getting rid of a man. And if he is still a minister within the Church, what is he to do? Is he to apply to some other presbytery to take him in? Or is he to remain unattached to any ecclesiastical body? It seems to us that the only proper method of disposing of this case, if it was taken up at all, was either to refer the whole matter to the synod, or at once to attach the members, as was done in the case of the foreign missionaries, to one or the other of the existing presbyteries.

b. Exclusion of the Synod of Western Reserve. [*]

[Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 263–267, 525.]

Mr. Plumer presented the following resolution: *Resolved*, That by the operation of the abrogation of the plan of union of 1801, the Synod of the Western Reserve is, and is hereby declared to be, no longer a part of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

This resolution was opposed by Messrs. Jessup, M'Auley, Cleaveland and Peters. It was supported by Messrs. Baxter, Plumer, Junkin, Ewing and Anderson. The debate occupied the attention of the house the greater part of the time from Tuesday morning, until the close of the session on Thursday morning, when the question was put and decided in the affirmative—yeas 132, nays, 105. †

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*;" same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1837, p. 448.]

† In the preceding sketch of the debate on the abrogation of the plan of union, [see p. 480, of *Review* for 1837,] some of the arguments presented were borrowed from the speeches delivered on the exclusion of the Western Reserve Synod, as the constitutionality of that plan was reargued, when this latter subject was under discussion. In like manner, in preparing the outline of the debate on the resolu-

The opponents of the resolution argued thus. 1. This measure is professedly based on the assumption of the unconstitutionality of the plan of union. We deny, however, that the plan is unconstitutional, because no provision of the constitution was violated.* We admit it was not purely presbyterial in its character. And that the plan itself professes. It was, what it professes to be, neither more nor less, a scheme to promote union and harmony and piety among a class of inhabitants who were gathered together from different quarters, and with different views of Church government. But we are now thrown upon such an age of new light, as to be told that a plan to promote piety and harmony is beyond the powers of our Presbyterian constitution. If this plan is unconstitutional, because it was not submitted to the presbyteries, then the acts to establish the Princeton Seminary, and your Boards of Missions and Education are also unconstitutional. There is not a particle of provision in your constitution for these acts, and they were never sent down to the presbyteries for approval. If there should come a change in the balance of power in this Assembly, and we believe it will come, you are preparing a fine weapon to be used by your opposers; one which these hawk-eyed Yankees, it is to be feared, will use in their turn when they have the power. They will take your hated trio, the Seminary and the two Boards, and lay them on the block, and by a single fall of your patent, cut off the three heads at a single blow. And, if they ever do it, they will plead the precedent you are now about to set, as a full apology for such a stretch of power. Again, if the plan of union is unconstitutional, because not sent down to the presbyteries, the adoption of the Scotch Seceder churches was unconstitutional, for that was not sent down, and that act is both *ipso facto* void, and all that has been done under it, is void *ab initio*, and they are not in the Presbyterian Church.

2. If we even admit that the plan was and is unconstitutional, it would not follow that the abrogation act sweeps away every thing which rests upon that plan. The principle that all the rights vested under an unconstitutional law are invalidated, and fall as soon as the law is abrogated, is monstrous: it would break all the ligaments of society, and destroy all the vested rights of property. If it should be applied to the present case, then all the licensures, ordinations, and titles to Church property, under the plan of union, were thrown to the winds. Your vote can never make it true; wise men and Christians will see the injustice; and half the state of New York will be involved in it. To show the unsoundness of this principle, we appeal to the opinion of one of the most eminent jurists that ever lived. Chief Justice Marshall, in giving the opinion of the supreme court in the Yazoo-land case, assumed the position, that as the state of Georgia was a party to the contract conveying those lands, that state could not disannul its own con-

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tion respecting the Western Reserve Synod, we have borrowed largely from the speeches on the exclusion of the New York synods, particularly from that of Dr. Beman, who, in his speech of Saturday and Monday, went at a great length into the whole question.

* These gentlemen differ very much on this point; sometimes they say the plan is unconstitutional, and sometimes that it is not; sometimes that it was unconstitutional at first, but has since been ratified, while some admit that it is utterly subversive of every principle of Presbyterianism. "I admit," says Mr. Skillman, (*Qr.* Stillman) "that the contract, as at first adopted, was not according to the constitution."—N. Y. *Ob.*, June 3.

tract for any reason whatever. We admit that the decision of the court in the case itself, as between those parties, did not turn on this point, respecting the constitutionality of the act, but on the charge of bribery in the legislature. But in giving the opinion of the court, the venerable judge has incidentally laid down a principle, which bears directly on the case before us. "For a party," he says, "to pronounce its own deed invalid, whatever cause may be assigned for the invalidity, must be considered a mere act of power, which must find its vindication in a course of reasoning not often heard in a court of justice." Cranch's Reports, vol. vi. p. 135. Are we wrong then in assuming that if the law of the state of Georgia, conveying these lands, *had been* unconstitutional, the legislature that made the law, and then repealed it, could not by this take advantage of its own wrong, and proceed to annihilate contracts made and rights vested under the rule which they themselves had made? Again, the judge says, "When a law is, in its nature a contract, when absolute rights have vested under that contract, a repeal of the law cannot divest those rights." Let us suppose, for illustration, that Congress should pass a law which is in fact unconstitutional, supposing it to be constitutional, and the thing goes on for thirty-six years, and under its operation various rights have vested, and various institutions, commercial, literary or political, have grown up, for instance, in the state of Pennsylvania. Now, at the end of thirty-six years, the law is pronounced unconstitutional, what would be the effect of such a decision? We venture to affirm that no court or Congress of the nation would ever attempt to carry out the decision, in the manner we are doing, to crush, not merely the institutions formed, but the state of Pennsylvania in which they have existed. Why, sir, what do you propose? By the very principle assumed, you have only power to annihilate the institutions formed under the plan of union. But you propose to annihilate a whole synod regularly and constitutionally formed. If this is justice, it is justice with a vengeance. Let us take another case. Suppose the state of Georgia had, thirty-six years ago, invited the missionaries to come and labour for the benefit of the Indians, assuring them of protection, and by an unconstitutional law, had granted certain rights and privileges to the missionaries and the Indians, on the strength of which houses and towns had been built; and then after the process of civilization had been going on for thirty-six years, there was a decision, not of Chief Justice Marshall of glorious legal memory, but of a majority in a vacillating legislature, that is chosen every year, and changes as often, that the law is unconstitutional. Could they then take advantage of their own wrong, and immediately send out the sheriff, without process or trial, to imprison the missionaries, break up their settlements, and hang the poor Indians, for no other crime than that of exercising the rights which had been granted to them by a former legislature?

3. We may, however, admit every thing that is claimed, 1. That the plan of union is unconstitutional; 2. That the abrogation act sweeps away every thing which rests upon it, and what follows? Why you cannot touch one synod or presbytery; you merely sweep away the churches which are of a mixed character. There are many good and honest men on the other side of the house, whose minds are so filled with rumours that they have hardly room to receive the truth, who are therefore prepared to say aye to this resolution, supposing they are going to cut off a synod formed on an unconstitutional basis. But this is not the fact. Our book says that a presbytery consists of all the ministers within a certain district, and a ruling elder from each church. The presbyteries out of which this synod was formed were regularly organized by the Synod of Pittsburg, and by the General

Assembly of 1825 the presbyteries were regularly formed into a synod, which has been recognized ever since. Now admitting there are churches among them formed on the plan of union, and that this plan is unconstitutional and void, how does this affect the standing of Presbyterian ministers and churches, or the standing of the presbyteries or synod? A minister becomes, by his ordination, a member of presbytery, and a constituent part of the Presbyterian Church. How is his relation to the Church affected by your pronouncing the plan of union unconstitutional? His standing is not on that plan, and therefore he does not fall, even though the plan be annihilated. You allow your ministers to be editors, teachers, farmers and merchants, without disowning them; are they necessarily out of the Church the moment they become the pastors of Congregational or mixed churches? It must be remembered that many of these ministers were regularly ordained by other presbyteries, about whose regularity there is no question. And yet you propose to declare them to be no part of the Presbyterian Church, merely because there are some churches connected with the Presbyteries to which they now belong, whose organization you choose to pronounce irregular.

4. Whatever name may be given to this proceeding, it is to all intents an act of discipline. Upwards of a hundred ministers and churches are to be condemned without a trial. If there are irregularities and disorders within the bounds of this synod which it refuses to correct, your proper course would be to cite them to your bar; to ascertain, by judicial process, the real state of the facts, and if they refuse to abate these evils, to deal with them as the case may demand. But this resolution cuts them off without the show of a legal process. It virtually excommunicates them without the form of a trial.

5. The consequences of the principle on which this measure is based reach much farther than many seem to imagine. You cannot consistently stop short after the excision of the Synod of the Western Reserve. If that synod is no part of the church, because the plan of union is unconstitutional, then all those synods and presbyteries embracing churches formed on that plan must also be disowned. What then will become, not only of the synods of Western New York, but of Albany and New Jersey? Why, there were in the Albany Synod, as late as the year 1808, and by the authority of the General Assembly too, things which you will acknowledge to be a great deal worse than the plan of union ever was. By the express command of the General Assembly, they were required to have, and did have, on the floor of the synod, as members, A WHOLE CONGREGATIONAL ASSOCIATION. And now what will you do? We go yet further. That same Albany Synod has controlled the acts of this body, and has furnished no less than five or six moderators in the seat which you now occupy. On the arguments of these brethren the Presbyterian Church is unsound to the core; this congregational gangrene has seized upon the very vitals of the body, and you cannot cut it out without destroying your own life.

Again, what are to be the legal consequences of these proceedings? Were you sitting in a state which had a court of chancery, his honour the chancellor might lay an injunction on your proceedings; and if it were done, a few hours would terminate the brief authority by which you sit in that chair. There can be no doubt that these proceedings can be reviewed in the courts of justice. Probably it would be the delight of the Pennsylvania legislature to crush your charter, if in one thing you depart from the line of the law; and if once done, it will be long before you get another. Let the men who are legislating against unconstitutional measures beware themselves not to do anything unconstitutional. We know who

said, "He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword." And if you take the sword of illegitimate power, you may yourself fall by the sword of the civil power.

There is one thought more which deserves serious consideration. The act you propose to do, will fix indelibly on the Presbyterian Church the character of utter faithlessness to her own solemn compacts. The Church in this country is fast treading in the footsteps of the world. What is now the state of our commercial credit at home and abroad? It is gone. As a nation we have broken faith with the natives who put themselves under the broad wing of our national eagle for protection. We have torn our solemn treaties to pieces, and given their fragments to the winds of heaven; and to wind up the disgraceful drama, we have imprisoned the missionaries of the cross, who went forth, by our own sanction, to enlighten and cultivate the Indian race. But what are you doing? You are outstripping everything which politicians have ever done. Go on and complete what you have done, and you will render American faith, in treaties and in commerce, and Presbyterian faith in religion, as notorious in modern history as Punic faith was in ancient days.

In support of the resolution, it was urged, 1. That it was neither in intention nor fact an act of discipline. Such act supposes an offence, a trial, and a sentence. The resolution, however, charges no offence, it proposes no trial, it threatens no sentence. It purports merely to declare a fact, and assigns a reason for the declaration. It has neither the form nor the operation of a judicial process. Should the resolution be adopted, it will not affect the standing of the members of this synod as Christians, as ministers or pastors. It will simply alter their relation to the Presbyterian Church. We do not propose to excommunicate them as Church members, or to depose them as ministers. We do not withdraw our confidence from them, or intend to cast any imputation on them. We simply declare that they are not constitutionally a part of our Church. Whether this declaration is consistent with the truth, and whether we have the right to make it, are the points now to be argued. The attempt to excite prejudice against the measure as a condemnation without trial, as a new method of discipline, as a high-handed and oppressive act of power, is uncandid and unfair. Is it an act of oppression for a court to declare that an Englishman is not an American, or that an alien is not a citizen? The decision may be erroneous, or it may arise from impure motives; but the effort to decry the mere mode of proceeding as an extra-judicial trial, a form of punishing without a defence, and before conviction, would be preposterous.

The resolution declares that the Western Reserve Synod is not a regular portion of our Church, and it rests this declaration on the unconstitutionality of the plan of union. Of course it is here assumed, first, that this plan is unconstitutional; and, secondly, that the synod in question is in the Church only in virtue of that plan. The former of these points, having been already decided by the house, is now to be

taken for granted. And this may the more safely be done because it has been freely conceded by members on the opposite side, and because it is so obvious as scarcely to admit of being proved. It is in fact as plain as that a Congregational church is not a Presbyterian church. With regard to the second point, we admit that something more is necessary than merely to prove that the plan of union is unconstitutional. It must be shown, in the first place, that the churches within the bounds of this synod were formed on the basis of this plan; secondly, that the abrogation of the plan effects the separation of those churches from this body; and, thirdly, that the connection of the synod is of necessity also thereby dissolved.

With regard to the first of these points it is, as a general fact, a matter of historical notoriety, and might be as safely assumed as that the United States were originally British colonies. It is extremely difficult, however, to get at the details, and ascertain what proportion of these churches are still Congregational. This difficulty arises from the censurable custom of reporting all the churches connected with the presbyteries included within this synod as Presbyterian churches, no matter what their real character may be. We are saved a good deal of trouble, however, on this point, by the admission of the commissioners from these presbyteries, that of the hundred and thirty-nine churches belonging to the synod, only from twenty-five to thirty are presbyterially organized; all the rest being Congregational or mixed.* This, surely, is enough to show, what indeed everybody knows, that this synod is essentially a Congregational body; that the great majority of its churches have no other connection with this Assembly than that which is given them by the plan of union. The question then is, does the abrogation of that plan dissolve this connection? It undoubtedly does, unless you take measures to prevent it, and declare the contrary. The system has been so long tolerated, that this house would be justified in a court of equity, and would doubtless be sustained by the presbyteries, if it should see fit to allow time for the churches formed under it to re-organize themselves and come into regular connection with this Assembly. But if, on the whole, the house thinks that the connection should cease immediately, they have nothing to do but to make the declaration contained in this resolution. The operation of the abrogation is to dissolve the connection. This is the common-sense view of the case which every man would take who had not got bewildered by looking at detached fragments of legal reports; and which any one who has patience to read a little more than a fragment, must take with increased confidence. The General Assembly pass a resolution declaring that

* See the statement given to the Assembly by Mr. Brown, elder from the Presbytery of Lorain, as reported in the Presbyterian, June 10, [1837.]

churches organized in a certain way may be connected with our body; afterwards they rescind that resolution—what is the consequence? Why certainly to withdraw the permission and dissolve the connection. The connection was formed by the first resolution, it lasts while the resolution continues, and ceases when it is repealed. This is common sense. "The plan of union," says the N. Y. Evangelist, announcing your previous decision, "is abrogated; and the churches which are built on that basis are now no longer a part of the Presbyterian Church."

It is however, objected that, where a law is of the nature of a contract, its repeal cannot invalidate the rights which have vested under it. We admit the principle freely, but we ask, what is a law; it is an enactment made by a competent authority, in the exercise of its legitimate powers. An act passed by a body that had no right to pass it, is no law; it has no binding force; it is legally nothing and can give existence to nothing legal. Suppose Congress should enact that the king of Great Britain should be the president of the United States, would that be a law? If the British acceded to the proposal, it would be of the nature of a contract; and if the argument of the gentleman opposite be worth any thing, it would be binding in despite of the constitution or wishes of the country. The fallacy lies here in begging the question; in assuming that an unconstitutional act of a legislature is a law. It seems, however, that Chief Justice Marshall has sanctioned the principle that an act, though unconstitutional, is valid, if rights have vested under it. We hold this to be *a priori* impossible. Of all eminent jurists, that distinguished judge infused most of common sense into his legal decisions, and made the law, as far as possible, what it purports to be, the authoritative expression of the sense of right which is common to all men. The passage quoted in proof of the assertion is from the decision in the Yazoo-land case. "The legislature of Georgia," says the judge, "was a party to this transaction; and for a party to pronounce its own deed invalid, whatever reason may be assigned for the invalidity, must be considered a mere act of power." This passage bears more directly upon another point, viz., the right of this body to pronounce upon the validity of its own act. But it was used also to prove that rights vested under an unconstitutional act are valid. It is asserted that even had the act of Georgia in question been unconstitutional, according to Chief Justice Marshall, the sales made under it could not be set aside. Before looking at the report from which this sentence is quoted, or ascertaining the connection in which it occurs, it is easy to point out the fallacy of the argument founded upon it. The very first clause assumes that the legislature of Georgia was a party to the transaction—but the legislature is

not a party to an unconstitutional law—such a law is not an act of the legislature, it is the unauthorized act of a number of individuals sitting in a legislative hall and going through certain forms. A legislature is the agent of their constituents; and it is a rule of law, as well as of justice, that the deed of an agent, acting under written instructions, is not binding on his principal, if it be done in direct violation of those instructions. Let us suppose that the legislature of Georgia, or rather the men composing it, should, in secret conclave, sell their whole state, with all its inhabitants, to some African monarch ignorant enough to make such a bargain, would it be binding on all future legislatures to the end of time? So say our clerical jurists; but it is a shame to evoke Chief Justice Marshall to deliver such law as this. Common sense would say that the African king had been cheated, but not that the state of Georgia had been sold. If any one will take the trouble to turn to the Report the gentleman has quoted, he will find that the first point made in the case which it details, was, Whether the state of Georgia was seized of the lands in question at the time of the sale? The second, Did the constitution of Georgia prohibit the legislature to dispose of the lands? The former of these questions the court decided in the affirmative, the latter in the negative; and it is ever afterwards assumed throughout the decision that Georgia owned the lands, and that the legislature had a right to sell. The third point was, Whether this legal act was vitiated by the alleged bribery of some of the members of the legislature? This point the court refused to go into, as not properly before them, and because, if the corruption did take place, it could only vitiate the contract between the original parties, and could not affect the rights of innocent *bona fide* purchasers. The fourth point was, Whether a subsequent act of the legislature, setting aside this legal and constitutional contract of their predecessors, was valid? which was decided in the negative. This case, therefore, proves the very reverse of what it was cited to prove "If the title," says Judge Marshall, "be plainly deduced from a legislative act, *which the legislature might constitutionally pass*, if the act be clothed with all the requisite forms of law, a court, sitting as a court of law, cannot sustain a suit brought by one individual against another, founded on the allegation that the act is a nullity, in consequence of the impure motives which influenced certain members of the legislature which passed the act." It is here assumed that if the law had been unconstitutional, it would be a nullity, the very opposite doctrine to that which the report is cited to prove. It requires, however, no judge to tell us that a man cannot sell what he does not possess; that he cannot convey a title to another which is not in himself; or that an unconstitutional act of any body is a nullity.

It would be easy to cull from the *Digest* of the Reports of the Supreme Court hundreds of cases in which this principle is asserted or assumed. Thus the court say, "If any act of Congress or of a legislature of a state violates the constitutional provisions, it is unquestionably void."* Again, "an act of Congress repugnant to the constitution, never can become a law of the land." Those acts which are of the nature of a contract are no exception to this rule. The case in Kentucky, relating to the old and new court, is a case of this kind. Where an officer is not removable at the will of the appointing power, the appointment is not revocable and cannot be annulled, it has conferred legal rights which cannot be resumed.† The act of the state appointing certain judges was therefore of the nature of a contract; the moment, however, the law creating the court to which it belonged was declared unconstitutional, the contract was annulled, and the judges were out of office. The state of New York passed a law of the nature of a contract, conferring on Robert R. Livingston and Robert Fulton certain privileges. This law was pronounced unconstitutional,‡ and the contract was rendered void. The act of the state of New Hampshire, altering the charter of Dartmouth College, was of the same nature; yet when the law was pronounced unconstitutional, all the appointments and contracts made under it were swept away. There are, no doubt, often cases of great hardship under the operation of this principle; and therefore special provision is generally made for them, either by enactments of the legislature, or by the courts of equity. The principle itself, however, is one of the most obviously just and universally recognized in the whole compass of jurisprudence. It would indeed be a deplorable thing if a legislative body, in defiance of the constitution, could, under the influence of passion or self-interest, bargain away the rights, liberties and property of their constituents, and, under the plea of the sacredness of the contract, entail the bargain on all their successors.

Even admitting then that the plan of union adopted in 1801 was of the nature of a contract, yet if the plan is unconstitutional it is void; it has existed hitherto only by sufferance, and may at any time be set aside. There is, however, an unfairness in this mode of presenting the case. The plan of union is not a contract in the ordinary sense of the word; nor have absolute rights vested under it according to the common use of those terms. "The provision of the constitution [of the United States respecting contracts] never has," says Judge Marshall, "been understood to embrace other contracts than those which respect property, or some object of value, and which confer rights which may

* See Cox's *Digest*, p. 168. † Ibid. p. 169. ‡ Ibid. p. 177.

be asserted in a court of justice."* The plan of union is little else than a declaration, on the part of the Assembly, that it will recognize churches organized in a certain way. The connection thus formed was perfectly voluntary; one which either party might dissolve at pleasure. Should these churches meet and resolve to break off the connection, Presbyterians would make no difficulty about vested rights and the sacredness of a compact. But this is a point we need not urge, admitting the act to be of the nature of a contract, still, if unconstitutional, it is void, and imposes no obligation on future Assemblies. It is, therefore, only by the application of legal principles to a case to which they do not refer, that any plausibility can be given to the arguments by which this resolution has been so strenuously assailed. We are not about to pass an *ex post facto* law, nor to interfere with the vested rights of any set of men, but simply to declare that the voluntary connection into which we entered by the plan of union with certain churches, is dissolved. These churches rest upon this plan; if the plan be removed, these churches are removed with it. What can be the meaning of the act of abrogation, if it is not to break off the anomalous and unconstitutional connection, which it effected between us and the accommodation churches? If Congress, twenty years ago, had formed a treaty, by which, in despite of the constitution, Canada and Mexico were allowed to send delegates to our national councils, would not the abrogation of that treaty put an end at once to the connection? And would the complaint about vested rights excite any sympathy where the case was known and understood?

It has been asked what would be thought of a state, which, by an unconstitutional law, should invite missionaries to come and labour for the benefit of the Indians, assuring them of their protection, and granting them many privileges, and after houses and towns had been built, and the process of civilization been going on for years, should, on the plea of the invalidity of the law, without process or trial, proceed to imprison the missionaries, break up the settlement, and hang the Indians. It requires the utmost stretch of charity to believe that such an illustration is deemed pertinent even by its author, or that it has any other design than to cast odium upon the members of this house. Let the case be fairly stated, and we are willing to submit it to the decision of the enlightened consciences of all good men. Suppose then that a state government had extended its protecting and fostering hand over the tribes on our borders, and granted them privileges inconsistent with the constitution, allowing them the right of representation, and an equal voice in making the laws of the state to which these tribes

* Wheaton's Reports, vol. iv. p. 629.

themselves were not amenable; and that in the course of years they had so increased as nearly to outnumber the legal inhabitants, would any good and honest man think it wrong for that state to say to these tribes, "You are now sufficiently numerous and strong to subsist by yourselves; you have flourishing settlements and abundant resources; we have given you the privilege of sitting in our councils and of making laws for us long enough to teach you the nature of our system, which you deliberately reject; your institutions and habits are different from ours; your ideas of government are inconsistent with our system; the influence which you are exerting upon us we believe to be destructive; it is time we should part; we leave you all your settlements, all your resources; we desire to live at peace with you, and see you prosper, but we wish that you should cease to make our laws or administer them upon us, seeing you will not submit to them yourselves." Is this a proposition to be compared to robbery and murder? Would the state which should use such language be worthy of universal abhorence? Must its name be written "in letters of Egyptian midnight," for the execration of all ages? With what regard to candour or Christian feeling then can such obloquy be poured on the measure under consideration, or upon those who advocate it? We are neither robbers nor murderers. We take away no man's rights. We simply maintain our own indefeasible right to self-government, and refuse to be governed by men who will not submit to the system they administer.

The next question to be decided is, whether, admitting the unconstitutionality of the plan of union, and that the churches formed upon it are now no part of our Church, does this authorize the declaration that the Synod of the Western Reserve is no longer connected with this body? We answer this question in the affirmative. According to the constitution of our Church, "As a presbytery is a convention of the bishops and elders within a certain district: so a synod is a convention of the bishops and elders within a larger district, including at least three presbyteries."* The question then is, are these presbyteries or this synod conventions of bishops and elders? This question has been already answered. They are not such conventions. They are composed of a few pastors and elders of Presbyterian churches, and a large number of the pastors and lay members of Congregational churches. There is less than one of the former class to four of the latter. It is obvious, therefore, that these are not constitutional bodies. They are not in the Church in virtue of the constitution. They are connected with us simply in virtue of the plan of union, and consequently when this plan is removed this connection ceases.

* *Form of Government*, chap. ix. sect. 1.

Again on the supposition that after all these accommodation churches are disconnected with this body, the presbyteries and synod still retain their connection, we should have presbyteries and a synod composed almost entirely of ministers. These are not regular Presbyterian bodies. If ten or twelve of our ministers were to go into New England, and engage in teaching, or connect themselves with Congregational churches, no synod could constitutionally form them into a presbytery. And if they had been thus formed, this body would not be bound to recognize them. Synods have indeed the right to make presbyteries, but they are restricted by the constitution in the exercise of this right to make them out of Presbyterian ministers and elders. It is said, however, that since there are regular churches and pastors within the limits embraced by these bodies, they are presbyteries and a synod within the meaning of the constitution. The fallacy of this argument is obvious. These materials are indeed included within the synod, but do not constitute it. A number of Presbyterian, Episcopal and Methodist ministers and churches could never constitutionally be formed into a synod in our Church. If such an anomalous body were ever recognized as a synod, it must be by some special arrangement. The question would then come up, is this arrangement constitutional? And as soon as this question is authoritatively decided in the negative, the irregular synod would be disowned. As to the objection that a minister becomes, by his ordination by a regular presbytery, a member of our Church, and that we have no right to declare that he is not a member, we answer, it is admitted he is a member as long as he continues connected with a regular presbytery. If, however, he joins a Congregational Association, he is no longer a member of our Church, and if he joins a body connected with us by some special tie, he ceases to be a member as soon as that tie is sundered.

Having now proved that the operation of the decision of this house on the plan of union is to sever our connection with the churches formed upon it, and that the organization of the Synod of the Western Reserve is also pronounced by that decision to be unconstitutional, the only question is, whether this Assembly has a right to make the declaration contained in the resolution under debate? We do not see how this point can be doubted. If the fact is so; if that synod is not formed on a constitutional basis, it must be competent for this house to say so. We are both a legislative and judicial body. It is the province of a legislature to decide what the laws shall be, and of a court to decide what they are. We have both these prerogatives. We can not only repeal the acts of former Assemblies, but if those acts are brought up by appeal, reference, or resolution, we can examine and decide whether or not they are consistent with the constitution.

It will be remembered that the Assembly of 1835 formed a compact with the Synod of Pittsburg in reference to the Western Foreign Missionary Society; which the Assembly of 1836 felt no scruples in declaring unconstitutional. The power of the Assembly to decide on the validity of its own acts was not then called in question. Chief Justice Marshall's opinion that a party to a contract cannot pronounce its own act invalid, had not yet been discovered. The question has come up before this Assembly, whether the act of 1801, adopting the plan of union, is constitutional? And it has been decided in the negative. This resolution brings up the question, whether the act of 1825, erecting the Synod of the Western Reserve on the basis of that plan is constitutional? Whatever doubt there may be as to the decision, there can be none as to the power of this house to make it.

It is asked, what would be thought if Congress should declare a sovereign State out of the Union? There are two false assumptions implied in this question. The first is, that the judicial and legislative power are united in Congress as they are in this body, which notoriously is not the case. The second is, that the Synod of the Western Reserve is regularly in the Church, and that we are about to cut it off by a simple legislative act. This is not the fact. We are not about to cut off a regular synod for heresy, which we admit, in all ordinary cases, would require a regular process. We are simply about to declare that the act of the Assembly of 1825, constituting certain presbyteries composed almost exclusively of Congregational churches, was unconstitutional and void. We are about to say that a convention of Presbyterian ministers and of Congregational laymen, is not a convention of Presbyterian bishops and ruling elders, and that no act of any General Assembly can make it so. When a state applies for admission into the Union, the question, whether it is organized in a manner consistently with the constitution of the United States, is always presented. Should this question be decided affirmatively by Congress, and this decision be subsequently reversed by the competent tribunal, the effect would, of course, be to throw the state out of the Union, or rather, to declare that it never was constitutionally a member. The only difference between such a case and the one before us is, that the legislative and judicial functions in our civil government are divided; whereas they are united in this house by the constitution under which we act.

The objection, therefore, which has been urged against the competency of this house, on the ground that a party to a compact cannot declare its own act invalid, admits of several satisfactory answers. In the first place, the acts forming the plan of union and erecting this synod are not properly of the nature of a contract. They are simple

legislative acts which this house is authorized to repeal. In the second place, an unconstitutional act of a body, is not and cannot be binding on its successors. It is not properly the act of the body, as has already been shown. Consequently even if the acts referred to were of the nature of a contract, they would be as devoid of any authority as an act of this Assembly to sell the United States. And in the third place, in virtue of the constitution of our Church we have judicial as well as legislative power, and it is our appropriate business to review all decisions of this or any of our judicatories when brought properly before us.

There is another principle on which this resolution may be justified. Every Church or community has the right to prescribe its own terms of membership; and its judicatories must be authorized to decide whether these terms in any disputed case are complied with or not. It is on this principle that we sit in judgment on the qualifications of our own members, and vacate the seat of any commissioner whom we find not to be duly qualified. And on the same principle we have a right to decide whether a presbytery or synod is constitutionally organized; in other words, whether it is a constituent part of the Church. For an unconstitutional body has no more right to a standing in our Church, than a state with a monarchical form of Government has a right to a standing in our national Union. In making the declaration contained in this resolution, therefore, we are assuming no irregular or unreasonable power, we are passing no *ex post facto* law, we are depriving no body of men of their vested rights. The only real question for debate is, is the declaration true? Is the Synod of the Western Reserve constitutionally organized? If it is not, it has no more right here than an Episcopal convention.

We come now to the question of expediency. It is urged against the measure proposed that it will produce the most disastrous results. It will invalidate the licensures, ordinations and judicial acts of all these presbyteries, and unsettle the title to Church property in all that region of country. Even if all these consequences were to flow from the passage of this resolution, it would not alter the state of the case. If that synod is not a synod, it is not a synod, no matter what the consequences may be of admitting and declaring the truth. But these evils are all fears of the imagination. No man's licensure, ordination or Church standing will be affected by this measure. This Assembly acknowledges the validity of the licensures, ordinations, and judicial acts of Congregational associations and councils, why then should it cease to acknowledge such acts of these irregular presbyteries? As to the Church property, we do not believe a single farthing will pass out of the hands of its present holders. This General Assembly does not

hold the property of these churches, nor do its owners hold it in virtue of their connection with this Assembly. If in any particular case the title supposes or requires the holders to be Presbyterians, it proves that those who gave the property wished it to be so held; and it can be forfeited only by the present holders becoming Congregationalists. It is said too that this measure will operate hardly upon regular Presbyterian ministers and churches connected with the synod. It must be remembered, however, that this body can act, in this case, only on the synod, or the body as a whole. If there is any portion of its presbyteries or congregations who wish to be connected with this Assembly, they can become regularly organized and effect the union without delay.

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We believe then this whole case to be exceedingly plain. The plan of union, on which the churches of this synod are in general formed, we believe to be unconstitutional, and that its abrogation severs the only tie by which they were connected with this body. We believe that the act by which this synod was organized is also unconstitutional and void, and that, from the nature of our system and the constitution of our Church, it is the rightful prerogative of this house to pronounce these acts to be invalid, and that the necessary operation of this decision is to declare the churches of this synod not to be a constituent portion of the Presbyterian Church. We feel bound to make this declaration, because it is true, and because, while it deprives no man of his ministerial or Christian standing, and robs no one either of his property or rights, it relieves us from a source of error and disorder which is distracting the peace, and destroying the purity of the Church. We do no man injustice by declaring that Congregationalists are not Presbyterians, and have no right to take part in the government of the Presbyterian Church.

After the resolution declaring the Western Reserve Synod not to be a constituent part of the Presbyterian Church had been adopted, it was decided that the commissioners from the presbyteries included within that synod, were not entitled to sit and vote in the Assembly. Their names were consequently omitted when the roll was called.

c. *Report on the Presbytery of Louisville.* [*]

[*Comp. Digest* of 1873, *pp.* 246–262, 603.]

That report is so long that we cannot insert it at length. It is

[* From Article on "*The General Assembly*," same topic, *Princeton Review*, 1866, p. 486.

drawn up with marked ability, and presents the case against the Louisville Presbytery in the strongest light. We do not think that any speech or document on that side of the question presents so plausible an argument in defence of the proposed action of the Assembly.

It states that three subjects had been committed to their consideration. 1. To examine and report the acts andproceedings of the Presbytery of Louisville. 2. To inquire whether the said presbytery, in view of the action referred to, is entitled to a seat in this Assembly. 3. To recommend what action, if any, the General Assembly should take in the premises.

Under the first head, the committee give an analysis of the Declaration and Testimony. Under the second they urge that the commissioners of the presbytery should be debarred from sitting in the Assembly, because it was discretionary to suspend from the privilege of a seat in a judicatory the parties who were under process. The presbytery was under process from the time the Assembly appointed a committee to examine into the action. Under the third head, the committee recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

Be it Resolved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America:

First. That the Presbytery of Louisville be, and hereby is, dissolved; and that the custody of its records, papers, and other property be transferred as hereinafter ordered.

Second. That a new presbytery be and is hereby constituted, to be known by the same name, occupy the same territory, and have watch and care of the same churches; said presbytery to be composed of the following ministers, (together with so many elders as may appear,) *viz.:* Rev. D. T. Stuart, W. W. Hill, S. Williams, W. C. Matthews, R. Valentine, B. H. McCown, J. H. Dinsmore, H. C. Sachse, T. A. Hoyt, J. L. McKee, J. P. McMillan, J. McCrae, H. T. Morton, J. C. Young, or so many of them, whether ministers or ruling elders, as shall, before their organization, subscribe the following formula, *viz.:* "I do hereby profess my disapproval of the Declaration and Testimony adopted by the late Presbytery of Louisville, and my obedience in the Lord to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," which formula, together with the subscribers' names, shall be subsequently entered upon these records. The said presbytery shall meet in the Chestnut street Church, in the city of Louisville, Kentucky, on the 20th day of June, 1866, at the hour of eleven o'clock, A. M., and shall be opened with a sermon by the Rev. J. P. McMillan, or in his absence, the oldest minister present, who shall preside until a Moderator is chosen.

Third. That so many ministers belonging to the late Presbytery of Louisville as are not herein named, are hereby directed to apply for admission to the presbytery now constituted, as soon after its organization as practicable, and they shall be received only on condition of acknowledging before the presbytery their error in adopting or signing the Declaration and Testimony, and of subscribing the aforesaid formula on its records. If at the expiration of two months from the organization of the new presbytery, these ministers shall not have made such application, or shall not have been received, their pastoral relations, so far as any may exist with the churches under our care, shall thenceforth be *ipso facto* dissolved.

Fourth. That the licentiates and candidates under the care of the dissolved

presbytery are hereby transferred to that now constituted, and the stated clerk of the late presbytery is hereby directed to place the records and other papers of the said presbytery in the hands of the stated clerk of the presbytery now constituted, as soon as such clerk shall be chosen.

Fifth. That this General Assembly, in thus dealing with a recusant and rebellious presbytery, by virtue of the plenary authority existing in it for "suppressing schismatical contentions and disputations," has no intention or disposition to disturb the existing relation of churches, ruling elders, or private members, but rather to protect them in the enjoyment of their rights and privileges in the church of their choice, against men who would seduce them into an abandonment of the heritage of their fathers.

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Dr. Gurley's paper, which was presented as a substitute for the resolution recommended by the committee, was adopted by the vote, *yeas*, 196; *nays*, 37. *Declined to vote*, J. H. Brookes, 1. The paper is as follows:

1. *Resolved*, That this General Assembly does hereby condemn the Declaration and Testimony, as a slander against the Church, schismatical in its character and aims, and its adoption by any of our Church courts as an act of rebellion against the authority of the General Assembly.

2. *Resolved*, That the whole subject contemplated in this report, including the report itself, be referred to the next General Assembly.

3. *Resolved*, That the signers of the "Declaration and Testimony," and the members of the Presbytery of Louisville who voted to adopt that paper, be summoned, and they are hereby summoned, to appear before the next General Assembly, to answer for what they have done in this matter, and that until their case is decided, they shall not be permitted to sit as members of any Church court higher than the session.

4. *Resolved*, That if any presbytery shall disregard this action of the General Assembly, and at any meeting shall enroll, as entitled to a seat or seats in the body, one or more of the persons designated in the preceding resolution and summoned to appear before the next General Assembly, then that presbytery shall *ipso facto* be dissolved, and its ministers and elders who adhere to this action of the Assembly, are hereby authorized and directed, in such cases, to take charge of the presbyterial records, to retain the name, and exercise all the authority and functions of the original presbytery, until the next meeting of the General Assembly.

5. *Resolved*, That synods, at their next stated meetings, in making up their rolls, shall be guided and governed by this action of the General Assembly.

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Every attentive reader of the minutes and reported debates of the last Assembly must be aware that in all that concerns the action of the Assembly in regard to the Presbytery of Louisville and its commissioners, there are three distinct points for consideration. First, had the Assembly the constitutional right to exclude these commissioners from a seat in the Assembly until their case was decided; and had it the right to dissolve that presbytery as was proposed by the committee;

or to dissolve other presbyteries on the contingency provided for in the paper of Dr. Gurley, which was finally adopted? The second question is, assuming that the Assembly had the right to do what it did, was there any sufficient reason for its action? Did the Presbytery of Louisville merit exclusion from the Assembly? The third question relates to the manner in which these things were done. There may be a right and wrong, a kind or unkind, a fair or unfair way of doing what in itself is just and proper.

The first of these questions alone has any permanent importance. It is comparatively a small matter that a court should inflict an unduly severe penalty; or that the judge should be harsh and overbearing in his spirit and manner, provided he has the law on his side. It was not the hardship to Dred Scott, as a man, or any want of courtesy on the part of the Supreme Court, that caused its decision in that case to shake the country like an earthquake. It was that the decision itself was in conflict with the long-cherished and settled convictions of the people as to what was the true law of the land. As to the first of the three questions proposed for consideration, it may be remarked that there are three different theories as to the nature of our Presbyterian system; all of which were advanced on the floor of the late Assembly, and each of which controlled the opinions and votes of those who adopted it.

The first is derived very much (as it seems to us) from an assumed analogy between the constitution of the United States and that of the Church. In our national and state governments, the constitution is a grant of powers. Congress has no power which is not specified in the constitution; all others are expressly reserved to the states or to the people. In like manner, as many assume, the Presbyteries are the source of power in the Church. The Assembly has no power not expressly granted by the presbyteries in the constitution. And hence the demand was so frequently and earnestly made for a reference to chapter and section, where the power to exclude commissioners, or to act immediately on a presbytery, was granted.

The second theory goes to the opposite extreme. It assumes that the Assembly is the source of power to the other courts. Having all Church-power in itself, it has delegated a certain portion of its fulness to synods, presbyteries, and sessions. This was the doctrine for which the authority of Chief Justice Gibson, and of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania was quoted, especially by Hon. Mr. Galloway. A much higher authority might have been derived from the Church of Scotland.

The third view is that which, we presume, is held by the great body of Presbyterians. It assumes, 1. That all Church power is derived

from Christ and conveyed in his word, and by his Spirit. 2. That this power belongs to the whole Church, not to the clergy to the exclusion of the people, nor to the people to the exclusion of the clergy. 3. That it inheres in the Church, as the body of Christ, and, by his appointment, is to be exercised through certain office-bearers, who act as its representatives and organs. 4. These office-bearers are selected, qualified, and called by the Holy Spirit. 5. It is the function of the Church to authenticate this call of the Spirit, and to certify it as its judgment, to the people. This is done in ordination. 6. The office-bearers of a Church, therefore, are that Church, *i. e.*, they are authorized and empowered, in the name and behalf of the Church to exercise all the power which Christ has given it for edification. Hence the session of an individual church is authorized to do whatever an individual church may do, in the reception of members, in the exercise of discipline, and in the instruction and spiritual nurture of the people. So the presbytery is vested with the power of the Church within its limits. It is the representative, organ, and agent of the collective body of Christ's people included within its ecclesiastical limits. The same is true of synods, assemblies, or other general councils. These Church courts in no case derive their powers from the constitution. They possessed them before the constitution was framed, and would continue to possess them although it was entirely abolished. A number of Christians organizing themselves into a Church, and electing Church officers, would of course have the power which Christ has given to his Church; the power to judge of the qualifications of candidates for admission to Christian ordinances; to exercise discipline, and to provide for the edification of the people. The presbytery has, in like manner, independently of any written or human constitution, all the power which Christ has given to a presbytery,—the right to ordain, the right to suspend and depose from the sacred ministry; and the right to exercise all the functions of a Church within its own limits. The constitution is only a treaty, or a set of stipulations, as to how these several Church courts shall exercise the powers which they derive from Christ. The presbytery, for example, has the right to ordain, but it has agreed with other presbyteries not to ordain any candidate who has not received a classical education. That is, as the Scriptures require that a minister must be apt to teach, the presbyteries have bound themselves to regard a liberal education as one evidence that the candidate possesses that qualification. Again, the Bible requires that a minister should be sound in the faith, able to resist gainsayers; the presbyteries have agreed to make the sincere adoption of the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Confession a test of such soundness. The constitution therefore, instead of being a grant of powers,

is a limitation of them, so far as their exercise is concerned. It ties the hands of all the Church courts, and prevents their doing many things which otherwise they would have a perfect right to do. All this is reasonable and just. It is necessary to secure harmony, peace, and purity. If one presbytery assumed one standard of ability to teach, or soundness in the faith, and another another; the utmost confusion and conflict would be produced. Besides, a minister ordained by one presbytery becomes a minister of the whole Church, and exercises in the higher courts a jurisdiction over the whole body. The whole body, therefore, has an interest in his being suitably qualified, and a right to a voice in securing that end.

According to this theory every Church court has within its limits all Church power. The power of presbyters is given to presbyters, inheres in them, and is not delegated to them. It can be exercised by them, whenever they are properly associated and organized for the exercise of their functions. A commander-in-chief of an army can command a regiment or a company. In cases of emergency he does assume such command. It is only on rare occasions that this is either expedient or possible. He has too much to do, to allow of his taking into his own hands the duties of his subordinates. In the state, the care of children is properly left to their own parents. But in the case of orphans, or when the parents are untrustworthy, the courts interfere, and the children become wards in chancery. The court performs toward them the duty of parents. Our General Assembly has examined a minister, on his knowledge of experimental religion, and his qualifications for the sacred office, and received him as a minister of the Presbyterian Church, in good standing. Of course the cases are extremely rare in which the higher courts are justified in assuming the functions of the lower bodies, but, so far as the power to do so is concerned, we do not see how it can be questioned. If three presbyters have from God the right to ordain or depose, why should not three hundred have the same power? Our church in the early period of its history uniformly acted on this principle. When the original Presbytery passed into a Synod, the Synod continued to exercise presbyterial powers, in appointing commissions to license, to ordain, to visit churches, and adjust difficulties.

Such being the nature of the power of our Church courts, it is necessary to consider its limitations. The power of all our courts is limited in three ways: First, it extends only to things ecclesiastical, to the exclusion of secular affairs. Secondly, it is limited by the constitution. Thirdly, it is limited by the word of God.

1. The Church has authority only in matters pertaining to religion. It is organized and endowed by her Head with certain prerogatives in order to secure the propagation and preservation of the gospel, the

purity and edification of the body of Christ. If Congress should pass laws to regulate the religion of the country, they would be a dead letter. If Church courts transcend their limits, and undertake to decide questions pertaining to the state and its civil tribunals, their decisions have no binding force. The Church cannot regulate the tariff, or establish banks, or make all her members democrats or republicans, or interpret the constitution of the Union or of the states. Should it at any time attempt to legislate on these subjects, the people would regard their action with the same feeling they would the acts of Congress assuming to regulate the faith of the Church. As to this point there can be no difference of opinion.

2. In the second place, it is equally plain that an unconstitutional law is void *ab initio*. It is no law. It is not obligatory on any person or upon any organization. If a man refuses to obey a law of Congress or of the states, which the courts pronounce unconstitutional, he is held harmless. His disobedience is justified. This is an important safeguard in Church and State. As our constitution establishes certain fixed principles and rules, and limits the authority of all our courts, even the highest, any enactment or requisition inconsistent with its prescriptions, may be, and should be, disregarded. There is not a presbytery in the land which would give heed to any Assembly which should forbid them to ordain a candidate unless he had passed through a full three years' course in some Theological Seminary. The constitution also prescribes the terms of Christian and ministerial communion, and these can only be altered by altering the constitution. This is the principle which is enunciated in our book, when it says, that no constitutional or standing rule shall be considered binding, until it has been remitted to the presbyteries and received their sanction. That is, the General Assembly cannot alter the constitution, or give binding force to anything inconsistent with it. This is perfectly consistent with the recognition of the authority of the Assembly to "lay down rules," within the limits of the constitution. The laws of Congress bind the people, if constitutional; so the acts of the Assembly are binding under the same conditions.

3. The third limitation is that imposed by the word of God. That anything contrary to the Scriptures can bind the conscience of any man, or be rightfully imposed upon him as a rule of faith or practice, no Protestant will for a moment admit. If all the ecclesiastical bodies in the world should pronounce that true, which God declares to be false; or that right, which He pronounces to be wrong, their declarations would not have the weight of a feather. No law of man can make that sin which is no sin, or that virtue which is not virtue. Should the Assembly decree that eating meat, drinking wine, using tobacco, or

holding slaves, is sinful and a bar to Christian communion, if the word of God teaches the contrary, its decrees would bind his people no more than the decrees of Congress enjoining the worship of images or the adoration of the host. Here again, beyond question, we are on common ground.

Another great principle of our common Protestant Presbyterianism is the right of private judgment. It was said on the floor of the Assembly, in the warmth of debate, that the deliverances, acts, or injunctions, of that body, are to be assumed to be within the sphere of Church power, to be constitutional, and consistent with the word of God, and obeyed as such, until by competent authority the contrary is officially declared. This is the denial of the first principles of Christian liberty, whether civil or religious. Every man has not only the right to judge for himself on all these points, but is bound by his allegiance to God to claim and exercise it. The Bible teaches, and all Protestants believe, that the Spirit is promised and given as a teacher, not exclusively to the clergy but to all the people of God. Therefore, every Christian is bound to search the Scriptures, and to judge for himself whether the things decreed or commanded are consistent with that standard. Thus the early Christians acted when they refused to obey the constituted authorities of the Jewish Church. Thus afterwards, although the Bible enjoined upon them to be obedient to the powers that be; yet, when the Roman magistrates required them to burn incense to idols, they resisted unto death. There had been no Reformation, had not God taught and enabled his people to assert this right of judgment. Episcopacy would have been established in Scotland, and despotism in England, had not our Presbyterian and Puritan ancestors been men enough to claim and exercise the right to think for themselves, and to obey God rather than man. This right is recognized in the state. No man is bound to obey an unconstitutional law. If he errs in his judgment, and pronounces that to be unconstitutional, which is in fact legitimate, he must bear the penalty of disobedience. And so it is in the Church. If an individual, or presbytery, refuses to obey an injunction of the Assembly, from the conscientious conviction that it is contrary to the constitution or the word of God, he or it may be arraigned for disobedience, and condemned or justified according to the judgment of a competent court; for one Assembly is not bound by the decision of its predecessors; and may, therefore, justify disobedience to any of their injunctions, which it deems erroneous. On this right of private judgment we must all be agreed. Dr. Thomas, and other leaders of the majority in the late Assembly, repeatedly and expressly stated that former Assemblies had frequently made deliverances which they deemed to be contrary to the word of God. Of course they did

not, and could not adopt them; nor could they require others to approve them, without demanding that men should approve what they believed God condemned. The deliverances of the Assembly, therefore, by common consent, bind the people and lower courts only when they are consistent with the constitution and the Scriptures, and of that consistency every man may and must judge, as he has to render an account to God.

Such, as we believe, are the principles in which nine-tenths of our ministers and members will concur. It follows from these principles that the General Assembly, unless expressly prohibited by the constitution, can exercise, when the emergency demands it, its power to correct abuses or evils, immediately in any part of the Church. It has the right, on its responsibility to God, to refuse seats to delegates, or to dissolve any of the lower courts, if the safety or well being of the Church requires it. This follows from the scriptural principle of representation. Under the Old Testament by the appointment of God, the elders of the tribe were the tribe; and the elders of the congregation were the congregation, and could act as such. Under the New Testament dispensation, the elders of the Church, in council assembled, are the Church. The elders of a particular church are that church, and the delegated elders of the whole Church are the whole Church, and are clothed with all Church power, under the important limitations above specified.

In the second place, the right in question, and specially to exclude delegates, flows from the very nature of the Assembly as a court of Christ. It is a body of men duly appointed, consisting of those who recognize the Headship of Christ, the infallible authority of his word, and the Presbyterian system of doctrine and order. If any men present themselves as commissioners, who openly and avowedly declare them no Christians, or no Presbyterians, it is plain that the Assembly should be bound to reject them. The avowal may be so explicit and public, made *viva voce* or over their written signatures, as to preclude the need of examination or proof. If any presbytery should make an official declaration of Socinianism, and that declaration be signed by its commissioners, published to the world, and circulated through the Assembly, we presume no one would deny that the body would be bound to say to those commissioners, "you do not belong to the class of persons of whom, according to the Scriptures and the constitution of the Church, this court is to be constituted." If there be any doubt as to the facts, these ought to be cleared up. But if the facts are beyond question, then the right and duty of the Assembly is immediate and imperative. It is said that it is contrary to natural justice that any man should be condemned unheard. But, in the first place, in the case

supposed there is properly no condemnation, at least in the judicial sense of the term. The effect of the exclusion is not to depose, or even to suspend the parties from their office as ministers or elders, but simply, as it were, to arrest them and to remit them to the proper tribunal for trial. In the second place, a man cannot be said to be condemned without a hearing, who is condemned, (or rather arrested), out of his own mouth, for his own declaration made *in præsenti*.

In the third place, this right is analogous to the right of expulsion. If a man should rise in the Assembly and blaspheme, he may immediately be expelled. There would be no need of a trial or an examination. And fourthly, this right of peremptory and immediate action is the right of self-preservation, which belongs to all bodies and associations. It is exercised by all legislative assemblies. Congress may rightfully exclude any avowed traitor from taking his seat in the council of the nation. Every judge has the right to protect the sanctuary of justice by immediately committing to prison any one who violates its dignity. General Sheridan, in the last battles before Richmond, deprived General Warren of his command on the field, and sent him to the rear. This was a tremendous punishment inflicted without a hearing. It may have been an act of cruelty or injustice, but the right thus to act cannot be questioned. General Washington did the same thing in the case of General Lee in the battle of Monmouth.

These remarks are all applicable to the case of dissolving a presbytery. Should any such body make a declaration of Socinianism, or avow themselves to be infidels, the Assembly would not be bound to leave the people six months under the instruction and government of such open apostates. It would be its duty, in virtue of its charge of all the churches, immediately to dissolve the body, and deprive its members of all ecclesiastical power.

The views here expressed of the inherent power of our Church courts, and especially of the General Assembly, were presented and defended at length in the pages of this *Review* for July, 1838, pp. 464—490.[*] It was then shown: 1. That our church, from the first, adopted the standards of the Church of Scotland, both as to faith and form of government. 2. That in Scotland, so far from the Assembly being the creature of the presbyteries and deriving its powers from them, it existed before the presbyteries, and governed the Church for years before any presbytery was organized. It was the Assembly that formed first the synods, and then the presbyteries. 3. That the General Assembly in Scotland had from the beginning acted as the governing body of the whole Church, exercising, whenever it saw fit, original

[*See above, chap. xi.]

jurisdiction; acting directly on the presbyteries, and individual ministers, citing, trying, condemning or acquitting them, as it deemed right; transferring pastors from one parish to another without the intervention of any of the lower courts; and, in short, exercising a general and immediate jurisdiction over the whole Church. On this head we quoted from *Hill's Institutes*, the highest modern authority on the discipline and government of the Scottish Church, the following passage. After stating that the powers of the General Assembly are judicial, legislative, and executive, Dr. Hill says: "In the exercise of these powers the General Assembly often issues peremptory mandates, summoning individuals and inferior courts to appear at its bar. It sends precise orders to particular judicatories, directing, assisting, or restraining them in the exercise of their functions, and its superintending, controlling authority, maintains soundness of doctrine, checks irregularity, and enforces general laws throughout all districts of the Church." 4. That our *Confession of Faith* itself teaches, chap. xxxi. 2, that, "It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his Church," &c. And that "the decrees and determinations of such councils, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his word." It is here taught not only what the power of Church courts is, but also that it is from God, and not conferred by men. 5. Pages of that article of our *Review* are filled with citations from our records to show that the original Synod of Philadelphia, the united Synods of New York and Philadelphia, and the General Assembly, have uniformly acted as courts of original jurisdiction; acting immediately on individuals, sessions, and presbyteries, and that the Assembly has ever assumed that it had the power to correct abuses, by the immediate exercise of its authority, when necessity required, in any part of the Church. We cannot, therefore, agree with those who denied the right of the General Assembly to exclude the commissioners of the Presbytery of Louisville, or to dissolve the presbytery itself. It is to be remembered, however, that the effect of dissolving a presbytery, is not, as some of the speakers seemed to suppose, to suspend or to depose its members. It merely dissolves the bond which unites them as a church court. They might be attached to other presbyteries, or disposed of as the Assembly saw fit.

We are aware that in answer to a protest of the New-school party, against the abrogation of the plan of union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists, the writers of that answer take different ground

from that assumed above. They say: "1. The constitution of the Presbyterian Church, like that of our National Union, is a constitution of specific powers, granted by the presbyteries, the fountains of power, to the synods and General Assembly. 2. No powers not specifically granted can lawfully be inferred and assumed by the General Assembly, but only such as are indispensably necessary to carry into effect those specifically granted." On this it may be remarked: 1. That every one is aware that the Assembly is in the habit of appointing one or more persons to answer protests, who present their own particular views. It would be unfair to hold the Assembly responsible for the soundness of every argument which they may see fit to use. 2. The theory, the opposite to that assumed in this answer, was the basis of the whole action of the Assemblies of 1837 and 1838, and was constantly avowed in the debates. 3. Admitting that the Assembly of 1837 did commit itself to this false theory, that would have little weight against the uniform teaching and action of the Presbyterian Church, both in Scotland and in this country, in all periods of its history.

If it be acknowledged that the Assembly had a right to do what it did, the second question to be considered is, was there any adequate ground for the exclusion of the commissioners from the Louisville Presbytery, or for ordering the dissolution of every presbytery who should admit any of the signers of the Declaration and Testimony? On this question every man has a right to his own opinion. For ourselves we think there was no adequate reason for such action. 1. Because the penalty was unduly severe. It is among the heaviest within the power of the Assembly to inflict, and therefore, should be reserved for extreme cases. 2. There was no important object to be gained. The Church would not have been endangered in any of its important interests by the adoption of a milder course. 3. The Assembly itself virtually admitted that the signing of a Declaration and Testimony was not a sufficient reason for exclusion from our Church courts. It allowed those who had signed it, and who openly avowed in the presence of the Assembly, their continued adhesion to it, to retain their seats to the end of the sessions. Yet it ordered, that any presbytery who should admit one of those signers, should be *ipso facto* dissolved for doing what the Assembly itself had done. 4. This action, instead of tending to allay strife and division in the Border States, had a directly opposite tendency, and therefore, was so earnestly deprecated by some of the wisest and best men of the Church. 5. It places, or would place, if carried out, many ministers and churches in anomalous position, and put in jeopardy important interests. The dissolution of a presbytery, as before remarked, does not suspend or depose its minis-

ters, or separate them from the Presbyterian Church, or vacate their pulpits. Without further action it only throws all things into confusion.

These reasons, however, afford no justification of disobedience to the orders of the Assembly. A law is binding although severe or unwise. So the orders of the Assembly are binding, unless they transcend the sphere of Church power, or are contrary to the constitution, or to the word of God.

As to the third question, which concerns the mode adopted to secure the ends aimed at, we believe, from all we can learn, there is little difference of opinion. The leaders of the majority themselves deprecated the action of Dr. McLean, which, for some reason, they felt constrained to adopt. That a member should rise in his place, propose the exclusion of the members of a presbytery, make a speech in favour of his motion, and then move the previous question, and thus prevent any other member from stating his objections to the motion, or his reasons for preferring a different course, was certainly a most extraordinary proceeding. And then the motion to refer the case of the Presbytery of Louisville to a committee of the house, thus taking it out of the hands of the judicial committee, where it already was on the appeal of Dr. R. J. Breckinridge, was irregular and unnecessary. It prevented the matter from coming up in the way which had been designed, and which would have secured a fair hearing of all parties, and a calm judicial decision.

In looking back over the proceedings of the Assembly, there is much for which the Church should be thankful, and much which promises great good in the future.

In the first place, the Assembly recognized the right of protest and of free discussion, as belonging not only to its own members, but to all the members and ministers of the Church. This was declared to be the birthright of Presbyterians. It was called a sacred right, with which the Assembly disclaimed all intention of interfering. The right of protest, as it has always been exercised, includes the right of dissenting from the deliverances and judgments of Church courts, on the ground of their being unwise, unjust, unconstitutional, or unscriptural. It includes the right to make all proper efforts of proving the correctness of the grounds of objection, and to bring their brethren to agree with them.

Secondly: The Assembly recognized the principle that adhesion to its deliverances and judgment cannot be made a condition of Christian or ministerial communion. It would be a contradiction to allow of protest against a deliverance, and then demand approbation of it as a condition of membership in the Church or ministry. Should the As-

sembly declare that the holding of slaves is not a sin, or a bar to Christian communion, and allow Dr. Thomas and others to protest against such declaration as unscriptural, could it then require him to approve and act upon it on pain of exclusion from the Church? The judicial decisions of the Assembly are of course final, and must be submitted to, until the penalty be removed by a subsequent Assembly. Its orders and injunctions are to be respected in all cases, and obeyed, unless believed to be contrary to the constitution and the word of God. If an individual be arraigned for such disobedience, and the Church courts, including the Assembly, censure him for the offence, he would have meekly to submit to the infliction, (as the Quakers do for refusing to obey the military laws), or leave the Church. It is plain that the Assembly recognized these principles when it adopted the papers proposed by Dr. Gurley and Dr. J. C. Lowrie. The former expressly recognized the right of those who are not able to subscribe to the testimonies of the Assembly of 1865, or to carry out its injunctions, to remain undisturbed in the Church, provided they do not engage in movements defiant of the Assembly, and which lead to schism. The other paper does substantially the same thing. The Assembly has always acted on this principle in case of conscientious dissent from its testimonies, or failure to obey its injunctions. The abolitionists who openly repudiated the deliverance of the Assembly of 1845, and refused to act upon it in the exercise of discipline, were left to enjoy their constitutional liberty. That is, the Assembly avows its purpose of acting on the common sense principle adopted by every constitutional government. The state allows the people to think and say what they please about its laws, and to disobey them for conscience' sake, provided they do not disturb the public peace, and quietly submit to the penalty of disobedience, when judged to be without sufficient cause.

Thirdly: The doctrine taught by this Assembly respecting schism, is the scriptural doctrine on that subject, as it has ever been held in our Church. Schism is separation from the Church without adequate cause. It is a breach of Christian fellowship and subjection, enjoined by Christ on His people. This has ever been regarded as a great sin. No man is justifiable in thus breaking up the unity of the Church, unless he is required to profess or to do something which the Bible condemns as false or wrong; or unless he is prohibited from professing or doing what the Bible commands. We, as Presbyterians, are required to profess and teach nothing but what is contained in our doctrinal standards, and we are required to do nothing but to conform to the form of government and discipline which we have voluntarily adopted. It would be a sad thing if the union of the United States should be dissolved because Congress should enact an unjust tariff, or an uncon-

stitutional bankrupt law, and it would be equally grievous if the Church were to be rent asunder every time the General Assembly should, in the judgment of a portion of its members, err in their testimony or injunctions.

Fourth: This Assembly teaches the scriptural doctrine concerning slavery. It distinctly asserts that slaveholding is not a sin or a bar to Christian communion. This it does in two ways: First, by declaring that the recent testimonies on this subject are not to be understood in any sense inconsistent with the former deliverances of the Church. But, in 1845, the scriptural doctrine on this subject was not only distinctly stated, but elaborately sustained. The Assembly declares that it still adheres to that deliverance, and virtually reiterates it. Secondly, by saying that the errors intended to be denounced, the renunciation of which was insisted upon, were: 1. That slavery is a divine institution, "in the same category with marriage and civil government," (and therefore to be perpetuated and extended)—and, 2. That it is the mission of the Church to conserve the institution. These declarations of the Assembly are contained in the paper offered by Dr. Krebs and in the Pastoral Letter.

Fifth: The Assembly takes scriptural and liberal ground on the subject of Christian Union. It declares that it is desirous of retaining, or receiving into the Church, all who sincerely adopt our standards of doctrine and government, who adhere to the testimony of the Church, as just explained by the Assembly, and are willing to submit to its legitimate authority, that is, who are not schismatical in their spirit and measures. These principles are, in the paper presented by Dr. J. T. Smith, specially applied to the Southern churches. With regard to whom the Assembly says that it "greatly deplores the continued separation between ourselves and our Southern brethren, so long united in the bonds of Christian love and ecclesiastical fellowship; and expresses the earnest desire that the way may be soon opened for a reunion on the basis of our common standards, and on terms consistent with truth and righteousness."

In view of these declarations, it is the obvious duty of every minister and member of our Church to labour to allay all further alienation and strife. We have here a platform, broad, scriptural, and just, on which the whole Church, North, South, East, and West, may unite.

d. Power to Remove a Sentence. [*]

[Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 688.]

As soon as the preceding subject [†] was disposed of, the Rev. Dr. Maclean proposed the following preamble and resolution:

"Whereas the Rev. Archibald McQueen was suspended by the Presbytery of Fayetteville from the exercise of his ministry and from the communion of the Church, for marrying the sister of his deceased wife; and whereas the General Assembly of the last year, affirmed the decision of the presbytery; and whereas, in the judgment of this General Assembly, the censure which has been inflicted, hitherto submitted to, ought to be removed; therefore, *Resolved*, That the Presbytery of Fayetteville be directed to remove the aforesaid sentence of suspension, and to restore the Rev. Archibald McQueen to the communion of the Church and the exercise of the ministry."

This unexpected motion added much to the excitement which the preceding question had produced; and Dr. M., while proceeding with his remarks was repeatedly called to order. The moderator, however, decided that he was speaking in order. At length the question was raised, whether the motion itself was not out of order, inasmuch as it proposed to review and reverse a decision of the last Assembly, a motion which this Assembly was incompetent to entertain. The moderator decided that the motion was in order, which decision was, upon appeal, sustained by the house. Dr. Maclean then proceeded with his remarks, advocating the restoration of Mr. McQueen; principally on the following grounds; first, the diversity of opinion in the Assembly, by which Mr. McQ. was condemned; some censuring him mainly because he had violated a rule of the Church; others because the act charged merited in itself a limited suspension, while others thought he ought to abandon his wife before he could be restored. Secondly, he urged the excellent character of Mr. McQ. and the painful circumstances in which he was placed by the action of the Church. Thirdly, the great hardship of leaving one man under this severe censure, while so many other men were allowed to remain undisturbed in the bosom of the Church. He urged further the obsolete character of the law under which the sentence had been passed, and the respectful submission which Mr. McQ. had rendered to the painful sentence under which he laboured; and especially the consideration that the highest judicatory of our Church, whether the old Synod, or subsequently the General Assembly, had never been disposed to take extreme action in such cases. In support of this last position he cited various decisions of our earlier Church courts.

Dr. Nott moved the reference of the motion to the same committee to which the proposal for an amendment of the constitution had already been referred. Both the reference and the original motion were strenuously opposed by Messrs. Junkin, Breckinridge, I. W. Platt, and Chancellor Johns. The last named gentleman remarked that this was a case of discipline. When we find where we are, then we know what rule ought to govern us. It being a case of discipline there

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic, "*Case of the Rev. Archibald McQueen;*" *Princeton Review*, 1843, p. 457.]

[† *i. e.*, The proposition to amend the Confession of Faith by striking out parts of chap. xxiv., sec's. i. and ii. relating to incestuous marriages, which was not carried.]

is no doubt what course ought to be pursued. To take up such a case when the parties are out of court, the record gone, and all the pleadings out of view would be an unheard of proceeding. But viewing the matter in the light of a mere resolution it is a prejudging of the case. You may call it legislation, but the name will not alter the nature of the transaction. What would be thought of an appellate court, taking up a case already decided, and without hearing any of the parties or calling for the record, sending it down with all the weight of its influence, in favour of a reversal of the sentence? And shall we send down a mandatory writ to the presbytery, which has the exclusive right primarily to judge in the case? Let us stop here. My great desire is to preserve the purity of this high ecclesiastical court. As in civil matters a judge must not express an opinion in advance, so here we should cautiously avoid the expression of an opinion on a case that may yet come up before the General Assembly by reference or appeal. Let Mr. McQueen, if he is so disposed, apply to his presbytery, and if they refuse to entertain his application or to do him justice in the premises, let him complain or appeal to the Synod or General Assembly; but I beseech you, moderator, let not this high court of final resort disqualify itself for such a review, by prejudging the case.

As soon as Chancellor Johns concluded, the previous question was called and sustained. The motion for commitment being thus cut off, the question on Dr. Maclean's resolution was then put and rejected by an overwhelming vote, very few voices being heard in the affirmative.

The principle involved in this case is one of no little importance. The question whether the Assembly had the constitutional right to entertain the motion to restore Mr. McQueen, or to order his restoration, is of course very different from the question, Whether it was expedient to pass such a motion, or whether the method proposed was the right way of reaching the end aimed at. Dr. Maclean supposed he had sufficiently guarded his motion from the objections so forcibly urged by Mr. Johns, by avoiding all expression of opinion as to the decision of the preceding Assembly. It might be assumed that their sentence was perfectly equitable and just, and yet if it had been submitted to, and been endured for more than a year, it might be proper that it should now be removed. But has the Assembly the right, by a mere resolution, to inflict or remove a judicial sentence? A negative answer to this question does not appear to us to be sustained by saying that the Assembly has only appellate jurisdiction in such cases. This is a very prevalent doctrine, but its correctness is at least a matter of doubt. It is certain that the Assembly of the Church of Scotland has ever claimed and exercised original jurisdiction, acting as the presbytery of the whole Church. It is certain that similar ecclesiastical councils, have in all ages of the Church, acted on the same principle. And our own Assembly, in some few cases, has done the same. It has taken up a foreign minister whom one of our presbyteries refused to receive, examined him touching his qualifications, and passed a vote of approba-

tion, and authorized any presbytery to whom he should apply to receive him as a member. There may be cases in which the exercise of this right might be expedient and necessary. But whatever may be thought on this point, it should be remembered that the Assembly, though it is an appellate court, is a great deal more. There is no exact analogy between our judicatories, and the civil courts of the country, because in our civil government, the legislative, judicial, and executive functions are carefully distinguished, and in general committed to different hands; but with us all these powers are vested in the same bodies. The Assembly is the highest legislative, judicial and executive body in the Church. It was not called upon to act as a court, but as the executive. It was not asked to review a decision but to remit a sentence; to do what the executive of a state does, when it grants a pardon or remits a penalty decreed by a judicial tribunal. The Assembly could not be called upon to inflict a sentence, without parties, without records, or without argument, for from the very nature of such an act, it could only be performed by the body in its judicial capacity. But this does not prove that it might not remit even the most justly inflicted sentence, if the occasion called for the exercise of this executive grace.

Whatever may be thought of the abstract question of the right of the Assembly, in its executive capacity, to remit a sentence judicially inflicted, the argument against its exercise, in the case under consideration, seems to us unanswerable. There is the general objection founded upon the difficulty of discriminating between the executive and judicial functions of such a body, or of preventing the one from interfering with the other. We do not see how the argument of Mr. Johns is to be disposed of, that the Assembly was liable to be called upon to sit judicially on the very question which it was then called upon to decide by resolution. The question whether the censure inflicted on Mr. McQueen had been endured a sufficient length of time, was one which he might at any time bring before the Assembly, by applying to be restored to the exercise of his office. This suggests another of the arguments urged against Dr. Maclean's motion, that it aimed at accomplishing in an irregular way, an object which could be attained by the ordinary operation of our system. It was not a case for which the constitution provided no remedy. The lower courts were open to Mr. McQueen, and to them he might at any time apply, and in case of their refusal, he could seek redress at the bar of the Assembly. There was great weight also in the objection urged by Mr. Breckinridge, that the Assembly was called upon to act in ignorance of the facts necessary for a proper decision of the case. They did not know that Mr. McQueen even wished to re-enter a Church whose laws condemned his conduct;

they knew not officially whether he retained any relation to the Presbytery of Fayetteville, or whether he had connected himself with some other denomination. With what propriety then could the Assembly be called upon of its own motion, without any application from any quarter, to act in the business.

There is another consideration as it seems to us of great weight in this matter. The unavoidable consequence of acting on the plan proposed by Dr. Maclean must be a collision between the Assembly and the lower courts. Admitting that the Assembly has the right, of its own motion, to restore a man to the ministry, has it a right to force him on a reluctant presbytery? That the presbyteries may judge of the qualifications of their own members, is one of their most certain and important rights; and one which they can exercise without responsibility to any higher court. They have a right to refuse to receive any man as a member whom they judge for any reason to be unsuitable. Could the Assembly force an abolitionist on a southern presbytery? Where a case comes up judicially from a lower court and the Assembly decides that their reasons for suspending him were insufficient, the operation of that decision is indeed to restore him to his standing in the body, but this is very different from directing a presbytery to receive into their confidence and communion a man who has no connection with them, and whom they consider unworthy or unsuitable for membership. We doubt whether any presbytery would be willing, in this extra-judicial way, to receive any man against whom they had conscientious objections, on the simple direction of the General Assembly. If the Assembly chose to take the whole matter into their own hands, let them restore Mr. McQueen to his standing, and authorize any presbytery who saw fit, to receive him. This would be going great lengths, but it would be less objectionable than forcing him on a body whose consciences forbade their acknowledging him as a minister, in good standing. On the whole we greatly rejoice that a course so unprecedented and so liable to objection was met by a vote of such decided condemnation.

§ 6. Boards and Committees.

a. Voluntary Societies and Ecclesiastical Organizations. [*]

We are disposed to think there must be, on an average, at least one misrepresentation for every page in this work. As it requires more words to correct a misstatement than to make it, we should be obliged

[* Article, same title, reviewing "*A Plea for Voluntary Societies and a defence of the decisions of the General Assembly of* 1836 *against the Strictures of the Princeton Reviewers and others.*" By a member of the Assembly; *Princeton Review*, 1837, p. 101.]

to write a book instead of a review, if we thought it necessary to correct all these errors. We believe they may be safely allowed to work their own cure. It is our object to leave personal matters, as far as possible, on one side, and to attend to those only which are of general and permanent interest. The first topic of this nature presented in the work before us is :—

The relative claims of Voluntary Associations and Ecclesiastical Organization.

In the discussion of this point, a great deal of confusion often arises from not accurately defining the terms employed. Thus, our author says, (p. 17) "It is the revealed will of God to evangelize the world by the instrumentality of his Church." Here are two expressions, the meaning of which must be definitely fixed, to secure anything like accuracy of deduction, or correctness of result. The above statement is one in which high Church-men and low Church-men, papists and independents, would agree. Before we can argue from it, we must know first what is meant by the *Church*, and, secondly, what is intended by the expression "to evangelize the world." Our author informs us that "the Church is composed of all the sanctified in Christ Jesus,—all converted men—associated by public profession and covenants, under whatever form, for the maintenance of the worship of God and for the advancement of his cause." According to this definition believers are not the Church in virtue of their spiritual relation to each other and their divine head, nor in virtue of a profession of the true religion, but in virtue of their *association* for the maintenance of the worship of God and the advancement of his cause. The Church, then, is an associated, organized body, and it is to this organization the revealed will of God assigns the duty of evangelizing the world. This would be a good introduction to an argument in favour of the doctrine our author ascribes to the Pittsburg convention, but seems an extraordinary statement of preliminary principles in favour of voluntary societies. If the Church is a body of men organized for the purpose above specified, and if the revealed will of God has assigned to this organization the duty of evangelizing the world, then, beyond all controversy, the Church as such, as an organization, must do all that is necessary for the accomplishment of this object. If a number of men are organized as a school committee, or board of regents, to superintend the education of a whole community, then they are bound not merely as individuals but as an organization to attend to this object. It is their official duty, and any voluntary combination for the purpose of taking it out of their hands, would be a usurpation. Is then the Home Missionary Society a Church? Is it a body of believers associ-

ated by public profession and covenants? Or, has any such association ever appointed or constituted that society? If not, is it not, according to the doctrine of his book, interfering with the appropriate duty of a divine organization, and undertaking to do what God has assigned to other hands?

The truth is, the idea of *association* which the author has introduced into his definition of the Church, does not belong to it, in the sense in which he meant to use the term, as designating the catholic visible Church. And the introduction of this idea vitiates all his arguments, and leads him to conclusions directly opposite to those which he meant to establish. The Church, according to our Confession, "consists of all those who profess the true religion together with their children." The wandering savage who has heard the truth, who believes and declares it, is a member of this Church, as truly as any minister or elder. We concede that it is to the Church in this wide sense, the work of evangelizing the world is assigned. But here again, to avoid confusion, it is absolutely necessary to explain the terms employed. The expression to "evangelize the world" is very vague and comprehensive. It includes every thing which is designed and adapted to secure the extension and influence of the gospel. Education in all its departments, from the Sunday-school to the Theological Seminary; the circulation of the Scriptures and tracts; the preaching of the gospel, the ordination and installation of pastors, the mission of evangelists, &c., all are included. The Church then, or the people of God, are bound to put into operation all these and other agencies for the attainment of this great object. For this end they are bound, by the command of God, to organize themselves as a society. In what form this organization shall be made has always been a matter of doubt; and whether any one form is prescribed in the Scriptures is also a subject of debate. But it is on all hands conceded that the people of God are bound to organize themselves, under some form, in order to accomplish the great purpose for which the Church was constituted. It is as an organized society she is to judge of the qualification of new members, and exercise discipline on unworthy ones; that she is to select, ordain, and install pastors, and send out evangelists. There are then some of the most important of all the means for evangelizing the world, which can be employed by the Church in her organized capacity only. There are others as to which the people of God are at liberty to act either as an organized ecclesiastical society, or in voluntary combinations for some specific object. There can be no doubt that for some purposes, such as the distribution of the Scriptures for example, the latter is the preferable method. With regard to others there can, we think, be as little doubt that the ecclesiastical method is to be preferred.

To which of these classes should the work of missions be referred? Is that one of the methods for evangelizing the world which the people of God are bound to employ in their organized ecclesiastical capacity, or is it one with regard to which they are at liberty to adopt either plan, as they think best? And if the latter, which, all things considered, ought in our Church and under present circumstances, to be preferred?

To answer these questions intelligently, it must be borne in mind that the term *missions* is a very comprehensive one. It includes two very distinct functions, so to speak; the one strictly ecclesiastical and the other secular. When a man is sent out as a missionary, whether to the destitute or the heathen, it is his presbytery (we speak in reference to our own system) that sends him. They give him his mission and his authority as an evangelist, and it is to his presbytery he is responsible for the manner in which he discharges his duty; they alone have the right to determine where he shall go, and where he shall remain. There is then in the work of missions a part which the Church in her organized capacity alone has the right to perform, and which she is under the strongest obligation to execute diligently and faithfully. If these evangelists were all men of wealth, or if in all cases it was possible for them to be supported either by the labour of their own hands, or by the contributions of those to whom they were sent, there would be no need of any other agency in the business. The part which the ecclesiastical court is bound to do, would be all that is to be done. But as neither of the above suppositions is commonly realized, there arises the necessity for an organization to provide the means of sending these missionaries of the Church to their respective fields of labour and of sustaining them when there. Here comes in the secular part of the work of missions. There must be men organized and employed in collecting and disbursing money, and in attending to the numerous and often contemplated concerns connected with this subject. The whole debateable ground is covered by the question, Is it desirable that this secular part of the missionary work should be entrusted to voluntary associations, or to Boards appointed for the purpose by ecclesiastical bodies? We concede that either plan is allowable, the question is, which, all things considered, ought to be preferred?

That Churches and individuals are at liberty to decide this question for themselves is almost universally admitted. This is the ground which we have always taken.* Dr. Miller in his Letters to Presbyterians takes the same ground. And it is known to our readers that the Board of Missions officially and by its leading friends and officers on the floor of the Assembly have assumed the same position. In an

* See *Biblical Repertory* for July, 1835, p. 480, also for July, 1836.

address to the churches signed by Dr. Green as president of the Board, and by its two secretaries, it is said, "We are not only willing but anxious that the churches should be left to their own unbiassed and deliberate choice of the particular channel through which their charities should flow forth to bless the perishing: nay more, that the God of all grace may give to the poor a heart to pray, and to the rich a disposition to contribute liberally to either of these missionary Boards according to the decided preference of every donor.* The same ground is taken in the report on the subject of foreign missions, presented by Dr. Phillips to the last General Assembly.† There are no doubt many persons who suppose that there is an obligation on Presbyterians to sustain the Boards of their own Church, arising out of the general duty of members of a communion to the body to which they belong, or from the supposed superiority of these Boards, as to the wisdom or fidelity with which they are conducted. This, however, is a very different thing from resting this obligation on ecclesiastical authority. We are aware also that many who some years ago cheerfully voted to recommend the Home Missionary Society would not do so now, simply because they believe that that society has, under the management of its present secretary, become a great party engine, and is operating in a manner most unfriendly to the best interests of the Church. This, again, is a very different thing from opposition to that institution founded on the assumption that a voluntary society has no right to engage in the work of missions.

The people of God then, or the Church, in the wide sense of the term, are bound to do all they can to evangelize the world. One of the most important means to be employed for this purpose is, the sending abroad, among the destitute and heathen, preachers of the gospel. In conducting this work, there is a part which the Church, in her organized capacity, is alone authorized to perform, and there is a secular part which may be performed either by voluntary associations, or by Boards ecclesiastically appointed and controlled. Our decided preference is for the latter; it is a preference which every year's experience tends to confirm. But let us hear the objections which our author has to urge against such ecclesiastical organizations.

1. "For Church courts to assume the control and direction of missionary operations and disbursements," he tells us, "is an attempt to subject to ecclesiastical legislation that which the Great Head of the Church has left to the unbiassed decision of every man's conscience.

* See *Christian Advocate*, vol. 7, p. 138.

† We see substantially the same position assumed in the *Presbyterian* for Dec. 17, 1836.

. . . . . He has not authorized any ecclesiastical tribunal to assess the amount of each one's contribution, nor to prescribe the objects or modes of its administration," &c., &c. This objection is founded on a mere assertion, and on a most extraordinary one. The appointment of a Board of Missions by a Church court, involves an act of legislation as to the amount of each one's contribution, and makes alms-giving a matter of law! Do, then, the Boards of Missions and Education assess the amount of every man's donations? Are the contributions to those Boards less spontaneous than those given to the Home Missionary Society? We cannot imagine on what class of readers the author expected this argument to operate.

2 "There is no enactment in the Bible enjoining it on the Church, as such, in her organized form, by her judicatories, to evangelize the world." The author here, as so often elsewhere, loses himself in vague generalities. Is it not the business of the Church, by her judicatories, to ordain and install pastors, and send out evangelists? And are not these, of all means, the most important for evangelizing the world? The broad proposition as stated by the writer, is at variance with his own opinions, and those of everybody else, as far as we know. A little discrimination would have saved him from this mistake. There are certain things in carrying on the great work of spreading the gospel, which the Church, in her organized form, and by her judicatories, is not bound to perform, and there are certain other things which she can do in no other way. The secular part of the work of missions, as stated above, belongs to the former class. The mere collection and disbursement of funds, and attention to the secular business connected with missionary operations, may be performed either by persons ecclesiastically appointed, or by single individuals, or by voluntary associations, as may, in any given case, appear most desirable. But that the Church, in her organized capacity, has nothing to do with the matter, is a most grievous error. How low a conception of the Church as an organized society does this objection betray! The organization which Christ and his apostles have ordained, is to be set aside, and all its most important duties, according to this doctrine, are to be assumed by societies of man's devising.

As to the question of expediency, we have the following arguments against ecclesiastical organizations. 1. "That our Church, as such, in her highest court is not well adapted, by the mode of her organization, to superintend and direct the work of missions, either faithfully or efficiently." The reasons assigned for this statement are, that the members come from a distance, are frequently changed, are not familiar with the business, are incumbered with other affairs, &c. The little plausibility which belongs to this argument is due to a fallacy,

which we presume no reader can fail to detect. The author unfairly institutes an implied comparison between the General Assembly and the more permanent Boards, or executive committees of voluntary societies. But the comparison should be between the Assembly and the Home Missionary Society itself. The Assembly does not enter into the details of conducting missions, it is merely the appointing and controlling body. The question, therefore, is, which is worthy of most reliance as an appointing body, the representatives of all the churches, or a promiscuous assembly collected from all parts of the Union, for a few days in the city of New York, and whose members owe their seats and votes to the mere payment of a subscription? Had we, or any one else, attempted to undervalue the Home Missionary Society on the ground that it was impossible, that a number of men coming from a distance, remaining together but a few hours, practically ignorant of the business, changed more or less every year, could be competent to conduct the complicated and delicate work of domestic missions, what would the friends of the American Home Missionary Society think of such an argument? Would they not say that we know better, that we know very well that it is not the fluctuating subscribers collected for a few hours at the "business meeting of the Society," that really conduct the work of missions; but that this matter is committed to a corps of able and efficient men always at their post, and devoted in whole, or in part, to the business? Would they not tell us that the society was the mere appointing and controlling body, authorized to redress grievances and correct abuses, should any such arise? With the same propriety we may ask this writer and his friends, if they do not know that their argument, as above stated, is no less unfair and deceptive? Whether they are not aware that the Board and its executive committee appointed by the Assembly, are as permanent as their own, and as much conversant with the work of missions? We think the General Assembly need not shrink from a comparison with the Home Missionary Society. The members of the former are ordained ministers of the gospel and ruling elders of the Churches, men whose moral and religious character has received the sanction of their Christian brethren in various forms. The members of the latter may be, and we have no doubt are, very good men, but who they are, it is hard to tell. Any one who will comply with the rules as to subscription, &c., no matter what his character, has as much right to vote as the best and wisest members of the body. Again, which is the most promiscuous, fluctuating, and uncertain body? Which has the best opportunity of knowing and inspecting the conduct of the men whom they appoint? Does not every one know that the meetings of the society are little more than matters of form, that every thing is arranged beforehand, and

managed by the executive committee? This, from the nature of the case, must be the course of things.* The promiscuous assemblage collected for a few hours every year, cannot be expected to inspect very minutely the complicated doings of their agents for the preceding twelve months. We are not presenting these considerations as arguments against the Home Missionary Society, but as proof of the unsoundness of the objections urged by its friends against ecclesiastical Boards.

There is one point in which we are ready to admit that the advantage is with the Home Missionary Society. Its members are its friends; whereas, in the General Assembly, we have foes as well as friends. Those who attend the meetings of the former are supposed to be in honour and honesty bound to co-operate in promoting its success. Whereas, members of the Assembly feel at liberty to do all they can to embarrass the operations of the Board of Missions. This we acknowledge is a great disadvantage, but it arises, we must be permitted to think and say, from the exceedingly improper conduct of the opponents of that Board. So long as a majority of the Church wishes there should be a Board of Missions appointed by the General Assembly, so long is it the duty of the minority to allow it unembarrassed operation. If the majority of the churches and of the Assembly are of opinion that, under all the circumstances of the case, the Board should cease to exist, let them so decree. But it is evidently most unworthy conduct for a minority, by combination and by the secrecy of a ballot, to endeavour to harass and embarrass a Board they have not the courage or power openly to destroy. Of all the proceedings of the Home Missionary party in the last Assembly, the attempt to place in the Board of Missions men known to be inimical to its very existence, is certainly one of the most dishonourable. And what renders the fact the more humiliating and the more alarming is, that they were able to muster nearly their whole strength to accomplish this object. The votes in favour of the candidates unfriendly to the Board amounted to 125, while the vote against Dr. Miller's resolution was but 122, and that against the formation of a Foreign Missionary Board only 111. Let us turn the tables. Let us suppose a number of men by the payment of three dollars, or whatever the subscription may be, to become members of the Home Missionary Society, and to watch their opportunity

*A gentleman who was present at an anniversary of one of the large national societies, was accosted by one of the officers, and told there would be no Board of Managers chosen if he did not vote. Being informed by the gentleman that he was not a member, the officer threw a handful of tickets into the hat and walked off. This is an illustration of the degree of responsibility felt by the members of such societies. They are sensible the business all rests with the officers.

at some annual meeting, and vote out the present executive committee, and supply its place with men decidedly hostile to the existence of the Society, what would be the feelings of the religious community in view of such conduct? The indignation of every good man would be roused, and the impropriety would rebound on its authors. We cannot see in what respect the conduct of the 125 members of the last Assembly, just referred to, is less deserving of disapprobation.

2. Our author proceeds thus: "We maintain that Boards thus constituted, and acting under so wonderful a sanction of what is so little understood, are the most irresponsible bodies that could be devised. They are responsible to the public only through the General Assembly, and that body gathered from all parts of the land, changing every year, &c., &c." This argument is an inference from the preceding, and must stand or fall with it. If we have shown the fallacy of objecting to the Assembly as an appointing and controlling body, for characteristics which it possesses in common, though in a less degree, with the appointing body of the executive committee of the Home Missionary Society, there is little reason to say much on this objection. In what way is that executive committee responsible to the public for the management of its funds and conduct of its agents? Only through the transient, fluctuating, promiscuous, inexperienced body of subscribers who may happen to assemble at an annual meeting. If the public are dissatisfied, they may indeed withdraw their support, and this is the only effectual check. But are not the Assembly's Boards responsible in precisely the same way? If they act improperly, will not the public withhold their contributions? And is not the General Assembly as likely to be vigilant in detecting abuses, and is it not as competent for this purpose as the transient annual meetings of the Home Missionary Society? In our opinion, the advantage in this comparison is decidedly in favour of the Assembly. Its members are known; they are the representatives of the churches. The members of the other are in general unknown. Any one may join them; they are commonly self-appointed and self-delegated. As all Boards are liable to abuses, the question is, whether such a body as the Assembly, or such an one as the Home Missionary Society, is best constructed to detect and correct them? Can any one doubt on this point? The Assembly must assume the complexion, not of any one party or section in the Church, but must represent all parties and all sections. Is such a body likely to be less vigilant in watching the conduct of its servants, than one which is composed almost exclusively of men of one way of thinking and one party? Has the Secretary of the one Board as free a scope for party-management as the Secretary of the other? Can the one meet the General Assembly with the same hope of ready acqui-

escence in all his doings, as the other can meet his assembled subscribers at an annual meeting? Will the latter find any Mr. Jessup, or Dr. Peters, or Dr. Patton there, to recast up his figures, to sift with jealous eye his statements, to examine to what field he sends his missionaries, or from what sources he derives them? As far then as responsibility to the churches, and security for good management are concerned, we think there can be no comparison between the two institutions.

3. "By conducting all her concerns ecclesiastically, the judicatories of the Church would be loaded with an amount of property and of secular business, which would endanger her spiritually." "The concentration, therefore, in these courts, of so much ecclesiastical and pecuniary power, is both inexpedient and perilous." The author, still further to alarm his readers, makes the following monstrous supposition: "Suppose that in addition to this (its ecclesiastical authority) the Assembly possesses the property and pecuniary patronage of the whole Church, and how tremendous must be the power of this judicatory." He then asks, as well he may, "Who would not fear before this Assembly?" Does, then, the writer believe that it is proposed to invest the Assembly with the whole property of the Church? The whole force of this representation is founded upon the assumption that the funds contributed for education and missionary purposes, come into the treasury of the General Assembly, and are subject to its control. He knows, however, that the Boards of Education and Missions have each a treasury distinct from that of the General Assembly; and that the funds contributed to these Boards are received and paid out without any intervention of the Assembly in the business. The writer speaks as though these vast permanent investments were to be held by the Assembly, which might tempt the "cupidity" of its members. Whereas almost all the funds in question are the annual contributions of the churches which hardly remain a day in the treasury of the Boards, and which are given only so long as the churches have confidence in their faithful distribution. The power of the Assembly is hardly appreciably increased by the mere right of appointing the members of this Board, and then adjourning and dispersing itself among the churches, to be renewed the next year by new members, fresh from the presbyteries, and possessing their confidence. The pecuniary power of the American Board of Commissioners, though a close corporation, with its income of from one to two hundred thousand dollars, is next to nothing, and that of the Assembly is, if possible, still less.

Whatever danger there is of a money power becoming connected with missionary enterprises, it is far greater in regard to the Home Missionary Society than to the General Assembly. The latter body is renewed every year; it must take the character of the whole Church,

and cannot become corrupt until the Church is so. The former, is far less certain in its character, being composed of the subscribers for the time being, who may happen to meet in New York. As the secretary and officers of the Home Missionary Society can manage their annual meetings with greater ease and certainty than the secretary and officers of the Board of Missions can control the General Assembly, so the danger of abuse and malversation is greater in the one case than in the other. We think, however, such arguments are unbecoming and unwise. The wicked are sufficiently disposed, without being excited to it by Christians, to cry out about the danger of ecclesiastical authority, and the pecuniary power of religious institutions. And we regret that in repelling such arguments we should be forced even to appear to recriminate.

4. His last argument is founded on a distrust "of the relative efficiency of formal ecclesiastical organizations." In conducting this, as in all the preceding arguments, we find our author presenting the numerous, cumbrous General Assembly in contrast with the compact and alert Boards of voluntary societies; instead of comparing the Board of the one with that of the other. We are at a loss to imagine why a Board appointed by the General Assembly might not be as active as if appointed by the same men assembled as a voluntary society. The Boards of the Assembly are not so much behind others in their efficiency as to give this objection either much plausibility or much weight.

We must be permitted to leave for a moment the work of self-defence, and to assume, in our turn, the office of objectors. We have always readily admitted that there are purposes for which voluntary societies, embracing members of different religious denominations, are greatly to be preferred to separate ecclesiastical organizations. And in our number for July 1836, p. 429, we stated at least one principle by which such cases may be easily distinguished. Wherever the field of operation is common to different denominations, and the proper means for its cultivation are also the same for all, there is an obvious reason why all should unite. These conditions meet with regard to the Bible and Tract Societies, and in many important respects in regard to Sunday-school Unions. There are other cases in which voluntary societies of a denominational character may be either indispensable or highly desirable. On the other hand there are cases for which ecclesiastical organizations appear to us to be entitled to decided preference. To this class belong the work of educating ministers of the gospel, and that of missions. We shall proceed to state very briefly some of the grounds of this opinion.

In the first place, the object of these societies is strictly ecclesiastical

as well as denominational. Every Church has its peculiar system of opinions and form of government, which it is bound to preserve and extend. And in order to effect this object it is necessary that it should have under its own direction the means employed for its accomplishment. Of these means beyond all comparison the most important are the education of ministers, and the organization and support of Churches. The men who decide where and how the rising ministry are to be educated, and who determine where they are to go when their education is completed, have the destiny of the Church in their hands. This being the case, is it wonderful that each denomination should wish not only to have this matter under their own control, but confided to persons of its own selection? Is it wonderful that Presbyterians and Episcopalians should decline committing their candidates to the care of Congregationalists or Baptists? Or that they should be uneasy at seeing their churches supplied with ministers by a society in which some other denomination than their own, has an equal or controlling influence? On the contrary, would not indifference on these points argue a strange and criminal unconcern about what they profess to regard as the truth and order of God? We consider, therefore, the extension of the principle of united action by voluntary societies to cases affecting the vital interests of separate denominations as fraught with evil. Even if these sects ought to be indifferent to their respective peculiarities, they are not, and the attempt to deal with them as though they were, must excite ill-will and strife.

The answer to this objection, that the Education and Missionary Societies do nothing but provide and sustain men to be examined and installed by the judicatories of the several denominations, is very far from being satisfactory. The mere right to examine before presbytery the candidates for ordination is not the only security which the Church needs for the fidelity of her ministers. She wishes that by their previous training, they should be made acquainted with her doctrines, and become attached to her order. Reason and experience alike demonstrate that the perfunctory examination before an ecclesiastical body is altogether an inadequate barrier to the admission of improper men into the ministry, and that by far the most important security lies in the education and selection of the ministers themselves. If these matters are committed to other hands, every thing is given up.

Again, the office assumed by these societies involves an encroachment on the rights and duties of ecclesiastical courts. This may be inferred from what has already been said. One of the most important duties of the Church in her organized capacity is the preservation of the truth. It is her business to see that faithful men are introduced into the ministry and set over her congregations. To discharge this

duty properly, she must do more than merely examine men prepared and sent forth by other hands. She must herself see to their education and mission. These are in a great measure strictly ecclesiastical functions, which, to say the least, it is incongruous for societies composed for the most part of laymen, and without any ecclesiastical appointment or supervision to perform. Indeed it is one of the anomalies of the times, that laymen should be the great directors and controllers of theological education and domestic missions.

We have already remarked that there are in the work of missions two distinct functions, the one ecclesiastical, the other secular. The one *must* be performed by Church courts; the other *may* be performed by others. To the former belong the ordination, mission, direction, and supervision of evangelists; to the latter the mere provision of the ways and means, and the administration of them. There is a great difference between theory and practice on this subject. According to theory the committee of the Home Missionary Society may be the mere almoners of the churches' bounty. They may profess simply to stand at the door of the treasury to receive applications from feeble congregation and presbyteries. This is all very well. But if in practice they go much further than this, and assume the direction of ecclesiastical persons, deciding where they are to labour, instructing them as to the discharge of their official duties, and requiring their missionaries to report to them on all these points, then do they assume the rights and privileges of an ecclesiastical court; they usurp an authority and power which do not belong to them, and which they have no right to exercise. People may cry out against all this as high churchism. It is Presbyterianism. And if they dislike it, let them renounce it and the name; but do not let them under the guise of Presbyterians undermine the whole fabric. There can be no doubt that, according to the system of our Church, the control of ecclesiastical persons rests with ecclesiastical courts. Every licentiate and minister is under the direction of his own presbytery, and is bound to go where they send him, and to stay where they place him. It is to them he is responsible for the right discharge of his official duties, and to them he is bound to report. For any set of men to assume this direction, supervision and control of such licentiates and ministers, is a direct interference with the rights of presbyteries. If then, the Home Missionary Society practically assumes the direction and supervision of its four or six hundred missionaries, if it regards them as its missionaries, sent by it, determined directly or indirectly as to the place or character of their labours by its authority or influence, and demanding accountability to that society or its committee, whatever be the theory of the matter, it is a practical subversion of the whole system of our Church.

It may be replied to all this that the Board of Missions appointed by the General Assembly, are guilty of the same kind of interference with the rights and duties of ecclesiastical courts. To this we answer, even admitting such to be the fact, it does not mend the matter. Two wrongs can never make one right. But we deny that the cases are parallel. The Assembly's Board is an ecclesiastical body. It is the mere organ of the Assembly in conducting missions. All its members are appointed by that body, and its acts in the premises are virtually the acts of the Assembly. If the Assembly has "a constitutional and inherent right, as this author admits, to conduct missionary operations, it must have the authority to commit this business to a Board of its own appointment. In order to prove this point, it is not necessary to attribute to the Assembly the inordinate powers claimed for it, on several recent occasions by our New-school brethren. When they wished to create a presbytery without the concurrence of the synod, we were told glorious things of the power of the Assembly; it was represented as analogous to the parliament of Great Britain; it was called the great universal presbytery, vested with all presbyterial powers, and if we mistake not, the very source of all such powers. We do not believe all this, nor is faith in these extravagant positions necessary to lead us to the conclusion that, if the Assembly has a right to conduct missions, it has a right to conduct them by a Board. We might argue this right upon the acknowledged principle that where a specific power is granted, all subordinate powers necessary for its proper exercise are also granted. If the General Assembly, in virtue of its relation to the Church, and in virtue of the whole design of the constitution, as well as express provision, has the right to conduct missions, it is absolutely necessary that more or less of this business should be confided to agents, it matters little what they are called. The right to conduct missions belongs to the presbyteries, to synods, and to the General Assembly. Either or all of these bodies may attend to this business while actually in session, or they may refer the matter to a committee to do it for them. Again all analogy is in favour of the possession of this right; analogies derived from the Church of Scotland, from the action of our own Assembly in similar cases, (as in the constitution of Boards for the government of theological seminaries, &c.) and from political bodies. It is a matter of every day's occurrence, that all these bodies commit certain duties to be performed in their name and by their authority to boards or agents of their own appointment. The objection that if the Assembly can confide the work of missions to a Board, they may commit the hearing of appeals, &c., is about as forcible as the objection that if parliament or congress can appoint a Board of public works or navy commissioners, they may appoint a committee to pass bills through

all the stages of legislation. Besides, this is a point which has been settled by precedent and uncontested decisions of the Assembly, almost from the beginning. Almost from the first moment of its organization the Assembly has had a standing Committee of Missions, which did not cease to exist when the Assembly adjourned. In the year 1828 the Assembly resolved, That the Board of Missions have the power to establish missions—to select, appoint and commission missionaries,—and in general to manage the missionary operations of the General Assembly. Who contested the passage of this resolution? Who ever dreamed, before the meeting of the late Assembly, of declaring it a breach of the constitution? We cannot here pursue this subject. It is clear, however, as we think, that the Board of Missions, and committee of the Home Missionary Society, stand in very different relations to the business of missions; that what in the one is a decided infringement on the rights and duties of ecclesiastical courts, may have a very different character in the other.

It has already been intimated that one great objection to voluntary societies for the purpose of domestic missions and the education of candidates for the ministry, is the power which they possess. We are aware that the use of this argument is apt to excite suspicion against those who employ it. But the truth ought to be looked at dispassionately, and allowed its proper influence, as estimated by reason, and not by an excited imagination, or distempered feeling.* We say then that the power possessed by these societies is inordinate and dangerous. It is a power, in the first place, to control the theological opinions of candidates by the direction of their whole professional education; and in the second place, by means of these candidates thus prepared, extensively and materially to influence the character and action of the Church. It is in the power of the Home Missionary Society, or of its executive committee, to determine what character, as to doctrine and policy, a large portion of our presbyteries shall assume. This cannot always be done at once, but by a steady purpose and a gradual progress it may be more or less rapidly accomplished. And this progress will not be slow, if three, six, or ten ministers are ordained at one time, by one presbytery, and then sent to one neighbourhood. It would require little skill or talent for management, in this manner to decide the

* The writer, with unwonted frankness, on pp. 180, 181, gives us to understand that one great reason why his friends resisted the organization of a Board of Foreign Missions by the General Assembly, was the dread of the power it would give their opponents. The majority acted, he tells us, from the instinct of "self-preservation." He moreover clearly intimates, that the desire of power was the great motive which actuated the advocates of such a Board. Their professions of pious and benevolent motives, he very clearly regards as entirely hypocritical.

complexion of any presbytery where there are many new and feeble congregations.

But further, this power enters our judicatories, and is there brought to bear on questions of doctrine, of order and discipline. This results not merely indirectly from the ascendency obtained in congregations and presbyteries, but from the influence which the prominent friends and officers of these societies possess over those connected with them. In assuming the existence of such influence, we make no disparaging reflection on those who are the subjects of it, beyond the assumption that they are men of like passions and infirmities with others. It is no reflection to assume that a set of men who owe their support to the kindness or agency of another set, and who have the natural feeling of obligation which arises from this fact, and who are open to the usual innocent and even amiable sentiments which arise from association and co-operation, should be led to act with their benefactors and to follow them as their natural leaders.

We say this is a dangerous power, because it is apt to be unobserved. It is not the acknowledged authority of a prelatical bishop ascertained and limited by law, of an officer who has been elected for the very purpose of being the depository of this power. But it is an incident, a perquisite, a matter not taken into the account, without being, for that reason, the less real, or the less extensive. It is dangerous, moreover, because it arises out of the Church, and yet is made to bear upon all its internal operations. It is not the influence which superiority of wisdom, experience, piety or talent bestows on one member of a judicatory above his fellows; but it is an influence which cannot be met and counteracted within the sphere of its operation. Again, it is dangerous, because pre-eminently irresponsible. This irresponsibility arises from various sources; from the fact that it is not an official influence conferred by law, that it is intangible and secret, that those who wield it are independent of those on whom it operates. It is lodged in the hands of those who are not appointed by the Church or responsible to it; of men who owe their station to votes of a society composed of persons of various denominations, who may be decidedly hostile to what the majority of our Church considers its best interests. All that we have already said to show that a society, composed as the Home Missionary Society is, is far less safe and efficient as an appointing and controlling body than the General Assembly, goes to prove the peculiar irresponsibility of the influence of which we are now speaking. Can it be doubted that if the secretary of that Society had formed the purpose of doing all he could to influence the theological character of particular presbyteries, and to control their course of policy, he might prosecute this purpose long and effectually without exciting the notice

or animadversion of the Society itself? This is not a purpose to be announced to his unsophisticated and pious lay-associates. Their co-operation might be secured without their ever conceiving of any other bearing of their measures, than on the wants and wishes of the destitute.

Besides, this influence is irresponsible, because the society in which the control is vested, is uncertain, fluctuating, and unknown. Can any one tell who constituted the last annual meeting, or predict who will constitute the next? Can any one know whether the majority was Presbyterian or Congregational? Whether they were from New Haven or East Windsor? Our author has undertaken to present his objections to ecclesiastical Boards. We must be permitted to point out the weak places on the other side. We say, then, that it is a great objection to a society constituted for the purposes of domestic missions, that the Church possesses no adequate security for the character and opinions of its members. They may be good and they may be bad, but what the character of the majority at an annual meeting may be, who can tell? What security is there that they shall be even professors of religion, much less that they approve of the doctrine and discipline of the Presbyterian Church? Is it no advantage on the other side, that the members who appoint and control the Board, are men who have adopted our standards, and who are as ministers and elders known to the churches? This is no captious objection. Its importance is so great and so obvious that, to avoid this difficulty, the founders of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, preferred forming themselves into a close corporation, rather than be exposed to the uncertainty and instability of a voluntary society. It is time for the advocates of voluntary institutions to be ashamed of appealing to the American Board, whose organization is a most pointed condemnation of their favourite principle.

Finally, another dangerous feature of this influence is its concentration in the hands of a few persons. We have already seen that the Society, from its organization, and from the short time which it remains in session, can have little oversight or control over the operations of its officers. These officers are, in fact, almost the sole depositories of the whole of the power which arises from the employment of numerous agents, the disbursement of thousands of dollars, and the support of hundreds of ministers. And just in proportion to their facilities for controlling the society to which they belong, are their independence and irresponsibilty.

It may be said that this influence must exist somewhere, if not in the hands of the officers of the Home Missionary Society, that it will fall to those of the Boards of the General Assembly. If it must exist, then

it is of the first importance that it should be subjected to every possible check and to the strictest accountability. We believe, however, from the difference of their organization, especially as it relates to the Board of Education, the power in the one case is far less than it is in the other. And we have already said enough to show that it is more natural and safe, more closely watched and guarded, when exercised by men appointed by the Church in her organized capacity, than when wielded by the hands of irresponsible voluntary societies.

It will be seen that few of our arguments have any bearing on the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. We cheerfully admit that our objections to this institution are far less strong, and that they do not interfere with our entertaining for it the highest respect and confidence. It is only by a strange solecism that this society is called a voluntary association; it has, in fact, less of the character than any similar institution in our land, though it seems on this account to forfeit none of the esteem of those who are forever insisting on the necessity and excellence of the voluntary principle. The power of this society is comparatively small, and there is little temptation to abuse what it does possess. So long as it continues the course which it has hitherto pursued, and keeps itself aloof from the internal contentions of the Church, abstaining from all attempts to influence the decision of its judicatories on the missionary, as well as other questions, we are sure it will have the prayers, the confidence, and support of the churches.

There is one other remark which we wish to make in the conclusion of this part of our article. We have never been opposed to the existence of voluntary societies. While we have had our decided preference for ecclesiastical organizations, we have felt perfectly willing that those who differed from us should take their own course in doing the work of the Lord. Believing that there was a large part of the Church who would not co-operate with the Boards of the General Assembly, we have rejoiced that they had institutions through which their energies might be exerted in doing good. It was only in repelling the arguments of their exclusive friends against the institutions of the Church that we were led, in our number for July last, to animadvert in any measure on the evils connected with the operations of these societies. And now, we are writing in opposition to a formal and laboured assault against the Boards of the Church, combined with an extended personal attack upon ourselves. We are, therefore, not to be considered as aggressors in this business. And while we have a deep conviction that the Home Missionary Society, under the management of its secretary, has become a great party engine, operating most unfavourably for the peace, union, and purity of the Church; we, at the same time, believe

that his lay-associates are in a great measure innocent in this matter. With them, therefore, we have no controversy, and for them we entertain undiminished confidence and affection.

b. Warrant for the Boards. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xviii.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 422. *ff.*]

The first subject of importance which occupied the attention of the Assembly, was the reorganization of the Boards of the Church. On this and its collateral subjects, the last General Assembly had appointed two committees, and directed them to report to the present Assembly. Of one of these committees, the Rev. Dr. B. M. Smith, of Virginia, was the chairman, and of the other, the Rev. Dr. Humphrey, of Kentucky. On the first day of the sessions, Dr. Smith offered the following resolution, which was adopted, viz.:

Resolved, That a committee of fifteen be appointed, to whom shall be referred the overture of the last Assembly on the subject of Reorganizing the Boards of the Church, and the Church Extension Committee.

To this committee was referred the report of the committee appointed last year, without reading it to the house, and other papers connected with the subject. Towards the close of the sessions this committee of fifteen reported the following resolutions:

Resolved, 1. That at each meeting of the Assembly the Boards shall present their Records with their Annual Report.

Resolved, 2. That the Boards and Church Extension Committee shall elect to office their Secretaries for not less than four years; and the Assembly shall have power always to remove a Secretary for neglect of duty, or other sufficient ground.

Resolved, 3. That the Boards and Church Extension Committee be hereafter composed of twenty members each, to be elected in four classes, as formerly; besides the Secretary or Secretaries to be members *ex officio*.

Resolved, 4. That these Boards shall henceforth conduct their business without the employment of Executive Committees.

Resolved, 5. That five members shall be a quorum, except for the election of officers, when fifteen shall be a quorum.

Resolved, 6. That this Assembly now proceed to elect members of the Boards.

Resolved, 7. That all acts inconsistent with this action be repealed.

On motion of Dr. Armstrong, these resolutions were laid on the table without debate, with the view of taking up another series presented by Dr. Krebs.

The committee of the last Assembly, of which Dr. Humphrey was chairman, was, in his absence, represented by Dr. Boardman, who read

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Topic*, "*Reorganization of the Boards*," *Princeton Review*, 1860, p. 511.]

the report and offered a series of resolutions. The first of these was, that it is inexpedient to make any organic change in the constitution of the Board of Domestic Missions. The second resolution, which recommended that there should be no Executive Committee but the one in Philadelphia, was referred to the next Assembly. The third resolution, so far as it recommended the appointment of an Advisory Committee at San Francisco, was adopted. The fourth, which proposed that the Board should appoint one Corresponding and one Travelling Secretary, was said upon the table.

The first of these resolutions, as it brought up the whole subject, was discussed with great earnestness, and at great length. The debate was continued from day to day, until the close of the eighth day of the sessions, when the resolution was adopted. The yeas and nays were called, and the result was, yeas 234, nays 56. These numbers were slightly increased by absentees being permitted to record their votes, making the yeas 240, and the nays about 60. On the ninth day, Dr. Thornwell presented a protest against the above decision, which was referred to a committee, of which Dr. William Brown, of Virginia, was made chairman, to be answered. When, however, the resolutions above referred to, introduced by Dr. Krebs, were adopted, Dr. Thornwell withdrew his protest, with the leave of the house.

The resolutions presented by Dr. Krebs are as follows:

Resolved, 1. By this General Assembly, that the Secretaries of the Boards of the Church be instructed to notify the members thereof of their appointment, and of all the meetings of the Boards, whether stated or special; and when such meetings are for special purposes, the subject for discussion shall be mentioned in the notice.

Resolved, 2. That it shall be the duty of the above named Boards to send up to the Assembly, with their Annual Reports, their books of minutes of the respective Executive Committees, for examination; and it shall be the duty of said Committees to bring to the attention of the Assembly any matters which, in their judgment, call for the notice of the Assembly.

Resolved, 3. That it is not lawful for either of the above named Boards to issue certificates of life-membership to any person, or any testimonial, by virtue of which any person is permitted to sit, deliberate and vote with the Boards; but the Boards may devise and grant certificates or testimonials of special donations to the class of persons hitherto known as honorary members—it being understood and provided that such persons can in no sense be allowed by purchase or gift, to exercise any sort of right or position to deliberate and vote with the members appointed by the General Assembly.

Thus was this exciting subject finally settled, as by common consent; and it is to be hoped that it will not again be agitated, but the Church be allowed to go on unimpeded and united in her great work of missionary labour.

It would be in vain to attempt to present any adequate report of this protracted debate. To reprint the speeches as furnished in the papers, would fill up our pages with matter already in the hands of our readers. We shall attempt nothing more than the merest synopsis of the arguments urged on either side. 1. It was argued by Dr. B. M. Smith, that there were two kinds of government in the Church—the one founded on principle, the other on expediency. Voluntary societies were the product of the latter. They had proved among Congregationalists very efficient. It was natural that men coming into our Church from New England, should bring with them some of the leaven of the system to which they had been accustomed. As a counterweight to these voluntary societies, our Boards were created. They were the fruit of expediency. They were intended to do for us what voluntary societies had done for New England—to enlist the influence of leading men in all parts of the Church, by making them members of these Boards, which were a fungus growth, mere excrescences on our system. 2. He urged that the Boards did nothing. The whole work was done by the Executive Committees. The Boards were, therefore, an unnecessary incumbrance. 3. The mode of their election was ridiculous, and showed that the whole thing was a farce. Nobody took any interest in the choice, because everybody saw that those elected were not expected to do anything. Sometimes the wrong men had been elected. 4. He thought there was danger that these large Boards might pack the Assembly, and control its action. A small body could be more easily managed and kept in due subordination to the Assembly. He admitted the right of the Assembly to act by an organization outside of itself, but insisted that this organization should be a small body and immediately dependent on the Assembly, without the intervention of any unnecessary corporation.

Dr. Adger's argument was founded principally on the inefficiency of the present system. He said that $118,000 a year was a very poor contribution for a Church which could and should raise a million dollars annually for this great work. Your report says that the average salaries of your missionaries is $536, when $1,000 would not be too much. Only 1705 churches contribute to this fund, while 1783 churches are non-contributing. They do not contribute, he said, because they do not like the system. 2. He insisted that the system was wrong. God has given us a divine system of government—Sessions, Presbyteries, and Synods. The synod should not do the work of a presbytery, nor a presbytery of a session; much less should a Board be allowed to do the work of the presbyteries. Every presbytery should attend to the work of missions within its own bounds; the proper field for the Board was outside and beyond our ecclesiastical territories. It

is its business to follow the emigrants to New Mexico, Utah, Dacotah, &c., with the missionary and the means of grace. Each presbytery having performed what was necessary within its own borders, should send its surplus funds to a Central Committee, by which they should be used for missionary operations beyond the borders of the Church, and to aid the feebler presbyteries who need help to do the work within their own limits. 3. The Board system is not only wrong in principle and inefficient in operation, but it fails to unite the Church and call forth its energies. We want, he said, to co-operate with you, but we must work apart if you insist on your present system. We want to operate through our presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly. Boards have no life in them. The presbyteries do not feel any interest in the work of missions. They say the great Board in Philadelphia will attend to it. 4. It was strenuously urged on this side of the question, that the Boards were an incumbrance; that they did nothing; that they stood in the way between the Assembly and the Executive Committees, shielding the latter from direct responsibility to the Church, and yet exercising no real inspection or control over them.

Dr. Thornwell took higher ground. He argued the question as one of principle, as involving radically different views, on the one side, and on the other, of the nature and powers of the Church. His speeches on this subject were very long and very ardent. They are of course imperfectly reported, and we can only give the heads of his argument as presented in the public papers. 1. He insisted that God had laid down in the Scripture a form of Church government, from which we are not at liberty to depart. We can neither add to it nor detract from it. We can no more create a new office, or a new organ for the Church, than we can create a new article of faith, or a new precept for the moral law. It is not enough that a thing is not forbidden in the word of God, it must be expressly enjoined or implied by necessary inference. We must be able to plead a "Thus saith the Lord" for every organization or agency which we employ in carrying on the work of the Church. We have no "discretionary power to create a new Church court, or judicatory, or anything to stand in the place of, or to perform the duty which belongs to the Church of God's creation and ordination." As Christ gave his Church with its officers, courts, and laws, with a specific mission to accomplish in this apostate world, we cannot appoint another co-ordinate body to do the work which he appointed us to do. The General Assembly is the Board of Missions, the body which must be appealed to to do the work; Christ never authorized us to put it into other hands. 2. The powers which Christ has given his Church cannot be transferred. She cannot impose her responsibilities on any other body. A Christian cannot pray or live a holy life by

proxy. Congress cannot delegate its right of legislation to any organization of its own creation. It must itself make the laws. In like manner this General Assembly cannot transfer the power or the obligation to conduct the work of missions. It must be done by the Assembly itself. 3. It follows from these principles that the Boards are unscriptural. No one pretends that they are expressly enjoined in the Bible. It is not enough that they are not forbidden. Neither are they absolutely necessary to the exercise of the functions of the Church. And if neither expressly commanded nor necessarily implied in the powers explicitly granted, they are absolutely unlawful. 4. That the Boards are thus uncommanded and unauthorized creations was argued because they are distinct organizations. They are bodies complete in themselves, with members, heads, and hands. They have their presidents, executive committees and other officers. They are therefore as complete self-acting organizations as our presbyteries or synods. The General Assembly, indeed, can either review its action or dissolve them at its pleasure; but the same may be said of presbyteries and synods. 5. The existence of these Boards, therefore, is derogatory to the Church, as implying that her divine constitution is not sufficient. They are an indignity to the great Head of the Church, as implying that he has not furnished her with an organization adequate to the work which he has given her to perform. 6. This discretionary power of the Church, the principle that what was not forbidden is permitted, was the point of difference between the Puritans and the Church of England. Herber's idea was that the only limitation of the power of the Church was the non-contradiction of the Bible; it does not forbid the liturgy, the sign of the cross, and kneeling at the Eucharist, therefore these things are right; while the Puritans contended they are not enjoined in the Bible, and an absence of a grant is a negation of the power. Our covenant fathers in Scotland fought for the same principle. 7. This is with us a *res adjudicata*. The General Assembly at Nashville refused to constitute a *Board* of Church Extension, but did constitute a *Committee* for that purpose, which had operated successfully. 8. Special objection was made to honorary or life members of these Boards. Although not allowed to vote, such members were entitled to meet with the Boards, and deliberate on all questions which come before them. Thus for money, any man can secure for himself or for another this position in the Church, or in its organisms, for the conduct of the work of missions. This was represented as a great enormity. These, as far as we can gather from the report, were the principal heads of Dr. Thornwell's argument. The points made by the other speakers on the same side, were of course, with more or less prominence, made by him.

Dr. Spring and the Hon. Mr. Galloway made short and effective speeches, the one in reply to Dr. Smith, and the other in answer to Dr. Adger, and the debate was continued principally by Drs. Krebs, Boardman and Hodge. 1. It was shown that the assertion, that our Boards, had a New England origin and were founded on expediency as distinguished from principle, is contrary to historical facts. The men who originated our Boards were not men of New England origin, or imbued with New England ideas, but precisely the reverse. Our Church from the beginning had acted on the principle that the Church itself was bound to preach the gospel to every creature; that this commission involved the duty and the authority to train men for the ministry, to send them forth, to sustain them in the field, and to furnish them with all the appliances requisite for the successful prosecution of their great object. This work the Church cannot perform by its scattered members, nor by its regular judicatories meeting at long intervals and for short periods, and therefore there was a necessity for the appointment of distinct organizations for the accomplishment of the object. Hence the original Committee of Missions. But as the Church enlarged, there was a call for a division of labour, and for more efficient arrangements. This gave rise to the formation of the Boards of Domestic Missions, Foreign Missions, Education, Publication, and Committee of Church Extension. These were the legitimate outgrowths of our own principles, and not foreign organisms engrafted into our system.

2. As to the principle that everything must be prescribed in the word of God as to the government and modes of operation of the Church, or be unlawful, it was urged that no Church ever existed that was organized on that principle. Every Church that pleaded a *jus divinum* for its form of government, was content to claim divine authority for the essential elements of their system, while they claimed a discretionary power as to matters of detail and modes of operation; that it was absurd to do more than this with regard to our own system. The great principles of Presbyterianism are in the Bible; but it is preposterous to assert that our whole Book of Discipline is there. This would be to carry the theory of divine right beyond the limits even of the Old Testament economy, and make the gospel dispensation, designed for the whole world, more restricted and slavish than the Jewish, although it was designed for only one nation, and for a limited period. It was further urged, that this theory was utterly unscriptural, as the New Testament was far from exalting matters of government and external organization to the same level with matters of doctrine and morals. It was shown also to be an utterly impracticable and suicidal theory. If

this doctrine were true, we could have no Church-schools, nor academies, colleges, nor theological seminaries. No one pretended to claim for these an explicit "Thus saith the Lord." The work of missions on this theory would be impracticable, for it would be impossible to carry it out among heathen converts. The Church must have freedom to adapt herself to the varying circumstances in which she is called to act. The great objection, however, to this new and extreme doctrine is, that it is inconsistent with our Christian liberty, our liberty of conscience. It inevitably leads to the imposition of human ordinances as the commandments of God. The inferences which one draws from Scripture bind him, but they have no authority for others. It is not only revolting, but ridiculous, to say that the Bible forbids a Board and commands a Committee; that to organize the one is rebellion, while to constitute the other is obedience.

And finally, as to this point, it was shown that every objection urged on this high *jus divinum* theory against the Boards, bears with equal force against Committees. The one is no more enjoined than the other. The one can be just as well inferred as the other. We have a work to do, and it is admitted that we are to adopt the best means for doing it. If we think a Board better, we may take that; if we think a Committee better, we may take that. There is as much a transfer of authority in the one case as in the other. A Committee is just as much an organization, acting of itself after the appointing body ceases to exist, as a Board. The only difference between the Committee of Church Extension and the Board of Missions is, that the one consists of some eighty or ninety members, the other of thirty or forty. To make this difference a matter of vital principle, a question of divine right, the dividing line between rebellion and obedience is utterly unreasonable. But if it should be admitted that there is some minute difference in principle between such a Committee as that of Church Extension and a Board, what was to be said of the Boards of our Theological Seminaries? No objection is made to them, and yet they stand in the same relation to the Assembly as the Board of Missions. If the one is an organization outside the Church, so are the others. If the one has delegated powers, so have the others. If the one is forbidden, so must the others be. It is plain that this principle of divine prescription for every detail, cannot be, and is not carried out. 3. Dr. Boardman, with marked ability and effect, referred to our standards, and to the modest and moderate language therein employed, as utterly inconsistent with this extreme high-Church doctrine. Our fathers were content with claiming that our system is "agreeable with Scripture," and never assume an explicit divine prescription for all its details.

4. If the matter is viewed in the light of expediency, the argument is not less decisive against any radical change. Such change, without any imperative necessity, would itself be a great evil. It would be an inconsistency. After having for years contended not only for the lawfulness, but the necessity of Boards, for us now to cast them aside would be a dishonour to those who have gone before us, and utterly inconsistent with proper respect for the dignity of the Church. The Boards have been signally owned and blessed by the great Head of the Church, and made the means of incalculable good. The objection that certain presbyteries do not coöperate with our present organizations, is met by the fact that those who dissent on the ground of principle, are a very small minority, such as must be expected to exist in any free Church, under any system of operation; and as to efficiency, it is enough that the presbyteries which coöperate most liberally with the Board of Missions are precisely those which do most to promote the work of missions within their own borders. To throw our weak presbyteries, covering immense districts of thinly populated parts of the country, on their own efforts, and to confine the central committee to the region beyond our ecclesiastical limits, would be virtually to give up the work altogether, and to abandon the growing parts of the country to irreligion or to the labours of other denominations.

The objection that the Boards are a mere incumbrance, a useless intervention between the executive committees and the General Assembly, is met by saying: 1. That these Boards, consisting of members widely scattered, serve to increase interest and responsibility in the work. 2. They can be called together on emergency for consultation and direction when the Assembly is not in session. They can meet and spend days in the examination of records, and sifting out evils or errors which an Assembly of three hundred members could not possibly do. Occasions have occurred, and must be expected to occur more or less frequently, when, in the absence of such Boards, the Assembly would be obliged to create them *pro re nata*. The large size of these bodies, instead of being an objection, is a decided and great advantage. It is not necessary that all the members should attend every meeting. It is enough that they can be called together on emergencies. It is very inexpedient that every thing should be in the hands of a few men in Philadelphia, New York, or Louisville. If unwise measures are adopted, if personal likes and dislikes, or sectional feeling, should be found to influence the action of the members living in or near the seat of operations, a general summons of the Board can correct the evil. This has happened already. It is illustrated in other cases. Had the Bible Society been in the hands of a few men in New York, the society would have been ruined. It was by appealing to a wider

constituency that that great institution was saved. The same is true with regard to the Tract Society, and may prove true with regard to the Sunday-school Union. It is not safe to entrust such interests to a few hands; and although we have a safeguard in the supervision of the Assembly, yet, as that body meets only once a year, first in one place, and then in another; as it is cumbered with so much other business, and sits for so short a time, it is eminently wise not to have the supervision of all the five great benevolent operations of the Church centralized and monopolized by that body. We might as well abolish all the Boards of Directors of our Theological Seminaries and impose the work of supervision and direction on the Assembly. It is enough that the supreme power over these Boards is invested in our highest court; the power of appointment, supervision and control. The stockholders of no railroad or bank in the country undertake the direct supervision of the executive officers at their annual meeting. They all find it necessary to confide that supervision to a board of directors. And when such institution is a state or national concern, those directors are never chosen from any one place or neighbourhood. These are the common-sense and scriptural principles on which the Boards have been constituted, and which have secured for them the general confidence of the Church.

The overwhelming vote by which the Assembly declared any organic change in these institutions inexpedient, and the withdrawing of Dr. Thornwell's protest against that vote, on the adoption of the slight modifications suggested by Dr. Krebs, give ground to hope that the policy of the Church in this matter will not be again called into question.

c. *Relations of Boards to Presbyteries.* [*]

We have given much space to the record of the debate respecting the Board of Missions, because we regard the principles involved of general and permanent interest. The two main points at issue were, the relation of the Board to the presbyteries, and the principle that the Board is a missionary and not a sustentation organization. As to the former of these questions, it seemed to be contended for, on the one side, that the Board was bound to obey the presbyteries as their agent in the appropriations of the funds under its control; and on the other, that while great respect is due to the wishes and resolutions of presbyteries, the board is the final judge, as to what churches shall be assisted, what shall be the amount of the aid furnished, and how long that aid shall be continued. Perhaps the truth, as commonly, lies in the middle.

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*;" topic, "*Board of Missions*;" *Princeton Review*, 1853; p. 496.]

The Board cannot be under a hundred masters, each having the right to say what is to be done with money derived from the whole Church. The Board is intrusted with a certain income, to be appropriated for the support and spread of the gospel. They must of necessity have a large discretion in the disposition of this income. They must distribute it, not agreeably to the wishes of a presbytery limiting its views to its own necessities, but agreeably to the relative necessities of the whole Church. This is plain, and, therefore, whenever a presbytery recommends a particular Church to the Board for aid, it is competent for the Board to decide whether, consistently with other demands, they are able to furnish the required assistance, and to what extent. As to the question of their *ability* to afford aid in any given case, the Board must be the judge. But as to the question whether a particular Church *deserves* aid, whether it ought to sustain itself, or if not able to do so, be abandoned to its fate, the case is very different. The ability to decide, and the right to decide these questions, as it seems to us, are with the presbyteries. It is evident that a central committee of a half dozen brethren in Philadelphia cannot know the circumstances of every missionary church in the country, and be able to sit in judgment on the question what each can do in the matter of self-support, and whether the post is worth maintaining or not. Besides it is the prerogative of the presbyteries to judge of all questions of this nature respecting the churches within their own bounds.

For the Board to say we *cannot* aid a Church, because we have not the money, is one thing. But to say, we *will not* aid it, because we think it ought to sustain itself, is a very different thing. In the one case, the Board keeps its place as the agent of the Church, in the other, it sets itself over the Church, by putting up its judgment against the judgment of the only competent tribunal for the decision of the matter. It is analogous to the case of the Board of Education. That Board is not bound to aid every young man recommended by the presbyteries. On the questions how many candidates it can assist, and to what extent it can aid them, the decision is with the Board. But it cannot sit in judgment on the decisions of the presbytery and reverse them, and say, we *will not* assist a candidate whom you pronounce worthy, because we think him unworthy. This would be to invest the Executive Committee of the Board of Education with presbyterial powers over the whole Church. If a presbytery pronounces a man worthy, the Board of Education cannot refuse to aid him on the ground of his unworthiness, though it may on the ground of the lack of funds. In like manner, the Board of Missions may decline aid to a congregation recommended by a presbytery, on the ground of the want of funds, but not on the ground that it does not need aid,

or ought not to have it. This principle secures the Board its independence, and full discretionary power in the control of its funds, and at the same time it secures the presbyteries in the exercise of their undoubted right.

It is the actual or apprehended disregard of this principle on the part of the Board, which seems to have excited so much opposition in various parts of the Church. To have a committee in Philadelphia sitting in judgment on the question, whether a Church in Indiana ought to be assisted, or should sustain itself, and reversing the decision of its presbytery as to that point, and to claim and exercise the same power over every presbytery in our connection, may well excite opposition. How long would the Church tolerate the Committee of the Board of Education, rejudging the judgments of all the presbyteries as to the qualification of candidates for the ministry. We do not know that the Board of Missions claim the power to which we object; but if they do, as the Assembly has repeatedly sustained their course, the remedy is to be found in friendly discussion, until the views of the Church are settled, and then they will not fail to express themselves through the Assembly.

We repeat the statement of what appears to us the true doctrine, that it may be distinctly apprehended by our readers. The Board of Missions has the right to the distribution of its funds at its own discretion, and may, therefore, decline to aid a Church recommended by a presbytery, on the ground of the want of funds. But it has no right to set its judgment over that of the presbyteries, as to whether a given Church ought to be aided. The question how much money can be granted to a particular field, rests with the Board; but the question, what Churches within its own bounds shall be aided, rests with the several presbyteries. And we think the practical recognition of this clear distinction, would go far towards producing harmony and cordial co-operation, instead of growing discontent, such as was manifested in the Synod of New Jersey last fall, in several of the Synods of the West, and on the floor of the General Assembly.

d. Conditioning Aid on Length of Study. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xiv., sec. vi.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 399.]

In connection with this subject [Report of the Board of Education,] should be mentioned a memorial from the Synod of Cincinnati, and another from the Synod of West Tennessee, on the subject of the rule of the Board, requiring every beneficiary to pursue a course of three

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic, "*Board of Education;*" *Princeton Review*, 1844, p. 446.]

year's study; and a communication from the Board itself on the same subject. Upon these papers the committee of Bills and Overtures recommended the adoption of a resolution to the following effect: "That the Board be required to permit the presbytery under whose care the candidate may study, to be the judge of the length of time which shall be occupied in his theological studies."*

This resolution was opposed by Dr. Maclean, Dr. Junkin, the moderator, Mr. Boardman, Dr. Elliot, and others. Mr. A. O. Patterson, Mr. Williamson, Dr. Plumer, and others, supported the recommendation of the committee. Dr. Cuyler proposed a substitute to the effect that the General Assembly, being deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of a thorough course of preparation for the ministry, urge upon the Presbyteries to endeavour to elevate the standard of theological attainments by the students under their care, and that the pledge exacted by the Board of its beneficiaries, does not conflict with the constitution of the Church.

This substitute was adopted. We are not aware that the rule of the Board requiring their beneficiaries to study theology three years, was objected to on the ground that a shorter course of study was sufficient or desirable. It seemed to be the general sense of the house, as it has been the uniform sentiment and practice of the Church that as thorough a theological education as is attainable should be imparted to all candidates for the ministry. In the earlier periods of our history there was greater temptation than at present to lower the standard of ministerial education; but all attempts to effect that object were defeated. And to the honour of the Synod of Kentucky, it should be remembered that they submitted to the secession of the body now called the Cumberland Presbyterians, rather than yield to such demands. It is to this steadiness in requiring that men who are to teach others, should themselves be adequately taught, that the prosperity and usefulness of our Church is in no small degree to be ascribed. There is, however, a constant tendency both on the part of young men and presbyteries to shorten the term of study. The calls for labour are so urgent; the difficulties of support are sometimes so numerous; and it must be confessed, in some cases, the conviction of the need of much study, is so weak, that it often happens that young men hurry or are hurried into the ministry but half prepared for their work. This is a great calamity to them and to the Church. It is purchasing a temporary good, at the expense of a permanent evil. No man who has any just appreciation of the work of the ministry, would dare to assume its responsibilities, after a hurried course of two years' study.

* *Protestant and Herald*, May 23, 1844.

He would feel that the danger he ran of perverting the truth through ignorance, or of failing to defend it when attacked, was too serious an evil to be lightly incurred. All experience teaches us that ignorance, next to sin, is the most fruitful source of error, and that a few able, well furnished and faithful ministers, are far more efficient for good, than a multitude of uneducated though zealous men.

The objection to the rule adopted by the Board which seemed to influence the members who took part in the debate, was that it conflicted with the rights of presbyteries. The constitution permits a presbytery to ordain a candidate after two years of theological study. The Board require the beneficiaries to study three years. This, it was urged, they had no right to do. It was not contended that the Assembly itself, much less the Board, has authority to limit the discretion of the presbyteries in this matter. If a presbytery choose to license or ordain a candidate, when he has studied two years, they can do so without censure. The rule of the Board does not apply to the presbyteries, however, but to the young men. The Board do not say to the former you must allow your beneficiaries to study three years; but it says to its own beneficiaries you must agree to study at least that length of time. Any individual has a right to say to a young man: I will aid you during your theological course, provided you consent to study three years; and the Board, which represents a number of individuals, who act and speak through the General Assembly, have surely the right to say the same thing. It is only a condition which the donors attach to their contributions. If they are dissatisfied they can through the Assembly rescind the restriction, or if in the minority, withhold their contributions. There is neither assumption nor injustice in this. It can not be doubted that the great majority of the contributors to the Board of Education are in favour of requiring a three years' course of study, and for a minority to say they shall not give at all unless they give in a way which they think injurious to the Church, is surely unreasonable. The presbyteries are left at perfect liberty; they may license whom they please and when they please, within the limits of the constitution, but the Board as the organ of the donors and under the direction of the Assembly, may make a contract with the young men not to apply for licensure until they have completed their course of studies. A very important object is thus gained, without trenching on the rights of others.

§ 7. Parochial Schools.[*]

[Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 278.]

A committee, of which the Rev. Dr. James W. Alexander was chairman, appointed by the last Assembly, made an important report on the subject of Parochial Schools, which was read and ordered to be printed for the use of the members. The report closed with the following resolutions, viz:

"*Resolved*, 1st. That in the judgment of the General Assembly, any scheme of education is incomplete which does not include instruction in the Scriptures, and in those doctrines of grace which are employed by the Holy Spirit in the renewal and sanctification of the soul.

"*Resolved*, 2d. That in consideration of the blessings derived to us, through our forefathers, from the method of mingling the doctrines of our Church with the daily teachings of the school, the Assembly earnestly desire as near an approach to this method as may comport with the circumstances of this country.

"*Resolved*, 3d. That the Assembly regards with great approval, the attempt of such churches as have undertaken schools under their proper direction; as well as the zeal which has led individual friends of the truth to aid the same cause.

"*Resolved*, 4th. That the Assembly recommends the whole subject of Parochial Education to the serious attention of the Church—counseling all concerned to regard the maintenance of gospel faith and order, in the founding of new schools, the appointment of teachers, and the selection of places of education."

On motion of Dr. Young the following additional resolution was adopted.

"*Resolved*, That the whole subject of the report be referred to the Board of Education; that they may, from time to time, report to the General Assembly any further action that may be needed for extending through our churches a system of Parochial Schools."

The whole report was finally adopted, and ordered to be printed in the appendix to the Minutes.

The only point which gave rise to any debate, was that contained in the second resolution, which affirms that the "doctrines of our Church" ought to be mingled "with the daily teachings of the school," necessarily implying that there ought to be schools under the control of the Church. This brought up the great question, whether Presbyterians ought to join with other denominations and sustain the common schools of the state, or whether they should, as far as possible, establish parochial schools under their own exclusive control. When the matter first came up, Dr. R. J. Breckenridge made a short and effective speech against the principle of parochial schools; and Dr. Tallmadge spoke, in reply, in favor of the report. The subject was then postponed, and made the order of the day for the afternoon of the follow-

[*From article on "*The General Assembly;*" same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1846, p. 433.]

ing Thursday. When that time arrived, after a short debate, the discussion was again postponed, and finally the report was acted upon without having been debated to any extent according to its importance.

The principal objections urged against the report were, first, that the whole spirit of the age and of our country is in favour of popular education, that spirit we cannot effectually resist, it must have its course, and therefore it is the duty of every evangelical denomination to throw its influence into the movement, and give the common schools of the country as Christian a character as possible. Secondly, that since Presbyterians, in consequence of their general intelligence, have an influence disproportioned to their relative number, they are, of all denominations, the last which should withdraw from this general partnership; they are sure to derive more benefit from it, and to have more power in controlling it, than would be due to them on account of their numbers. Thirdly, that it must be disastrous for any body of Christians to separate themselves from the community, sitting apart as on an isolated tripod, out of communion with their fellow-citizens. If they would prosper, they must enter heart and hand in the common enterprises of the country, in which they have an interest, and not attempt to set up for themselves. Fourthly, that the diversity of sects to be found in all our towns and villages, renders it impossible that each Church should have its own schools. Fifthly, that the plan proposed would involve a vast expenditure of men and money; millions would be required to erect and sustain a school in connection with every Presbyterian congregation in our land.

These arguments have certainly great weight, but they do not seem exactly to meet the case, nor to counterbalance the considerations on the other side. Dr. Lindsley, Dr. Reed, Mr. Mebane and Dr. Young sustained the report, the latter speaking at some length and with great strength of argument in its support. It is a conceded point that children ought to be religiously educated; that not merely natural religion, but Christianity, and not merely Christianity in general, but in the definite form in which we believe it has been revealed by God for the salvation of men, ought to be inculcated on the infant mind, so that the rising generation shall be imbued with the knowledge of divine truth. Secondly, it may be assumed as conceded that it is the duty of the Church to impart this religious education. This is one of the most important parts of her vocation. She received her commission to teach; she is by the will and authority of her author an institute of education, established to communicate and preserve the knowledge of God, of Christ, of the way of salvation and of the rule of duty. Thirdly, this is a duty which the Church cannot devolve on others; she cannot throw

the responsibility on the state, for it is the very work God has given her to do, and she might as well look to the state to preach the gospel, as to make disciples of the nations by *teaching* them. Fourthly, the only question then is how the Church is to acquit herself of this obligation; how is she to fulfil her vocation as teacher as far as the young are concerned? Can she safely rely upon family instruction, on Sunday-schools, on the religious teaching of pastors, separately or combined? It is acknowledged that all these modes of religious education are legitimate and important, and ought to be assiduously used, but they are all inadequate. With regard to family instruction, it is obvious that many parents have no disposition to teach their children the doctrines of the gospel; others who may have the disposition, have not adequate knowledge or skill; so that if the Church were to rely on this method, a very large part of the young for whom she is responsible, would grow up in ignorance. As to Sunday-schools, they are inadequate for two reasons, first, because in most cases they embrace children of various religious denominations, the instruction given is consequently often too general; and secondly, because only an hour a week is devoted to the subject, a portion of time altogether insufficient to attain so great an end as teaching Christianity to the rising generation. As to pastoral instruction, this is or ought to be the main reliance of the Church, and is an agency of divine appointment which no other should be allowed to supersede and weaken. Much in many parts of the Church is effected by this means, and more ought doubtless to be accomplished. The pastor by catechetical instruction, by teaching the Bible, and by other means, has it in his power to do a great deal towards attaining the great end in view. The pastor is the teacher, the διδασκαλος of his whole people. But at best this brings under instruction only the children of the Church-going part of the population, leaving a large portion of the whole number unprovided for. Then again it is rare that the pastor can, or at least does, bring even all the children of his own people under this course of training. Either their number, or the wide extent of country over which they are scattered, or the pressure of other duties, or the remissness of parents, or other reasons, prevent this agency from fully accomplishing the desired end. It is an obvious fact that if the children of the country had no other religious instruction than that derived from the pastor, they would to a vast extent grow up unenlightened by the knowledge of the Bible. Our condition is greatly modified by the peculiarity of our political institutions. In Prussia and other countries of the old world, the law intervenes and requires the attendance of the children on the instruction of the pastor and makes it obligatory on the pastor at stated times to give that instruction. Every pastor has always under instruction all the children

of his district, between the ages of thirteen and fourteen for boys, and eleven and twelve for girls. He is required by law to meet them once a week and take them through a prescribed course, and they are required to attend his instructions, and at the end of the year they are publicly examined. A certificate of having satisfactorily sustained that examination, is demanded of every young person before he can marry or in any way settle in life. Any thing of this kind among us, is of course out of the question. Unless therefore the Church can employ some other agency than those already mentioned, she will not accomplish her vocation as the teacher of the people. That other agency is the common school. In all ages of the Church and in every part of Christendom it has been considered a first principle that religious teaching should be incorporated with the common school system. This is not peculiar to Protestantism. In Popish countries it ever has been, and still is the great aim of the priesthood to get the children imbued, while pursuing their secular education, with the doctrines of the Church. In this they are right. Their error lies not in thus incorporating religion with early education, but in teaching a false system of religion.

Until the difficulty arising from diversity of sects began to be felt, it was the universal rule that the Church system, the doctrines of the gospel as held by the Church, should be sedulously taught in the schools. To meet the difficulty just suggested, the first plan proposed was to fix upon some common standard of doctrine in which the several sects could concur, and confine the religious teaching within those limits, leaving denominational peculiarities to be otherwise provided for. On this plan in Great Britain the attempt has been made to unite not only evangelical Protestants, but even Protestants and Romanists in the same schools. This plan has satisfied no party, and though still persisted in, has proved in a great measure a failure. It is peculiarly inappropriate for this country. Because as we are obliged to act on the principle of excluding no class of the people from the common school, this common standard of doctrine, is of necessity that with which the very lowest and loosest of the sects of the country will be satisfied. It is not only the Episcopalian, Romanist, Presbyterian, Methodist or Baptist, that must be satisfied, but Socinians, Universalists, and even Infidels. An immediate outcry is made about religious liberty, and the union of Church and State, if in a public school any religious instruction is given to which any of these parties object.

This has led to the plan of confining the instruction of the schools to secular branches exclusively, and leaving the parent or pastor to look after the religious education of the children. This is becoming the popular theory in this country. It is already difficult, in many places,

to retain even the reading of the Scriptures in the public schools. The whole system is in the hands of men of the world, in many of our states, and is avowedly secular. Now with regard to this scheme it may be remarked that it is a novel and fearful experiment. The idea of giving an education to the children of a country from which religion is to be excluded, we believe to be peculiar to the nineteenth century. Again, it is obvious that education without religion, is irreligious. It cannot be neutral, and in fact is not neutral. The effort to keep out religion from all the books and all the instructions, gives them of necessity an irreligious and infidel character. Again, the common school is the only place of education for a large class of our people. They have neither parental nor pastoral instruction to supply its deficiency or correct its influence. Again, this plan is so repugnant to the convictions of the better part of the community that its introduction into our colleges has been strenuously resisted. Where is the Christian parent who would send his son to a college from which religion was banished, in which there were no prayers, no preaching of the gospel, no biblical instruction? But if we shrink from such an ungodly mode of education for the few who enjoy the advantages of a classical education, why should we consent to the great mass of the children of the country, being subjected to this system in the common schools? Under the plea and guise of liberty and equality, this system is in fact in the highest degree tyrannical. What right has the state, a majority of the people, or a mere clique, which in fact commonly control such matters, to say what shall be taught in schools which the people sustain? What more right have they to say that no religion shall be taught, than they have to say that popery shall be taught? Or what right have the people in one part, to control the wishes and convictions of those of another part of a state as to the education of their own children? If the people of a particular district choose to have a school in which the Westminster or the Heidelberg catechism is taught, we cannot see on what principle of religious liberty, the state has a right to interfere and say it shall not be done; if you teach your religion you shall not draw your own money from the public fund. This appears to us a strange doctrine in a free country; and yet it is, if we mistake not, the practical working of the popular systems in every part of the Union. We are not disposed to submit to any such dictation. We cannot see with any patience the whole school system of a state, with all its mighty influence, wielded by a secretary of state, or school commissioner, or by a clique of Unitarian or infidel statesmen, as the case may be. We regard this whole theory of a mere secular education in the common schools, enforced by the penalty of exclusion from the public funds and state patronage, as unjust and tyrannical as

well as infidel in its whole tendency. The people of each district have the right to make their schools as religious as they please; and if they cannot agree, they have the right severally of drawing their proper proportion of the public stock.

The conviction, we are persuaded, is fast taking possession of the minds of good people that the common school system is rapidly assuming not a mere negative, but a positively anti-christian character; and that in self-defence, and in the discharge of their highest duty to God and their country, they must set themselves against it, and adopt the system of parochial schools; schools in which each Church shall teach fully, fairly and earnestly what it believes to be the truth of God. This is the only method in which a religious education has hitherto ever been given to the mass of the people of any country, and the novel experiment of this age and country, is really an experiment to see what will be the result of bringing up the body of the people in ignorance of God and his word. For if religion is banished from the common school it will be excluded from the whole educational training of a large part of the population. It is an attempt to apply to the whole country, what Girard has prescribed for his college. Under these circumstances the Church of every denomination is called upon to do its duty, which is nothing more or less than to teach the people Christianity, and if this cannot otherwise be done thoroughly and effectually, as we are persuaded it cannot, than by having a school in connection with every congregation, then it is the duty of the Church to enter upon that plan and to prosecute it with all her energy. It is often said that we cannot argue from the case of European countries to our own. But the Free Church of Scotland has taught us that it is not only in established churches that the system of parochial schools is feasible. The devoted men who are laying the foundation of the new system in Scotland, never imagined that their duty would be done if they planted a pastor and a church in every parish. They at once, and with equal strength of conviction and purpose, set about establishing a school in connection with every church. It is as much a part of their system as having ministers or elders. And it should be ours also. A school of this kind, established and controlled by the session of the Church, becomes a nursery for the Church, the ministry and the whole land. Its blessings are not confined to any one denomination. The people are so anxious to get a good education for their children, that they will not hesitate to send them to a Presbyterian school, if that is the cheapest and best. Do we not see Romish schools crowded with Protestant children, attracted by the reputation of the teacher or the facility of acquiring some trifling accomplishment? If we do not adopt this course, others will. If Presbyterians do not have schools

of their own, other denominations will soon have the education of Presbyterian children. Romanists are every where setting up for themselves; and as the principle on which they act commends itself to the judgment and conscience of good people, other denominations will soon follow their example.

The objection on the score of expense does not seem very formidable. The portion of money for each school which comes from the public treasury is, in most of our states, very small. And if the several denominations adopt the plan of parochial schools, the state will soon be forced to the obviously just method of a proportionate distribution of the public funds, whether derived from taxation or lands or a capital stock. A beginning has been made on this plan in New York in favour of the Romanists, and what has been granted to them cannot long be withheld from others. But even if we are to be permanently cut off from all support from the state, still the expense can be borne. Any good parochial school would soon sustain itself, and be able to afford gratuitous instruction to those who need it. Nor can we see that we should thus isolate ourselves. We have too many points of contact with the community of which we form a part, to admit of any such isolation. Action and reaction to any degree that is healthful to us or useful to others cannot fail to be kept up. Our having separate churches, pastors and church courts, do not make us a separate people in the country, and we see not why having separate schools should produce that effect. The greatest practical objection to the plan proposed would seem to be the minute division of the population into sects. In reference to this difficulty we would only remark, that a population that can sustain a church is large enough to have a school; and secondly, if the school be good, its support will not be confined to Presbyterians. Methodists and Baptists will not refuse to educate their children at all rather than send to a school under the charge of Presbyterians. All experience shows this to be true. We sincerely hope, therefore, that the plan proposed by the report and sanctioned by the Assembly, may be adopted and strenuously prosecuted by the churches. Let the session of the church look out for a competent teacher; let them prescribe the course of instruction, making the Bible and the Catechism a regular part of every day's studies, and we doubt not the plan will meet the concurrence of the people and the blessing of God.

§ 8. Correspondence with other Churches. [*]

[*Form of Gov.*, chap. xii., sec. v.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 268.]

A communication from the General Conference of Maine, proposing

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1840, p. 413].

a correspondence with the General Assembly was received, and referred to a special committee, consisting of Messrs. M'Pheeters, Doolittle, and Sterrit. This committee subsequently made the following report, which was adopted, viz.:

"Although the subject referred to the committee has respect only to one ecclesiastical body, yet your committee are of opinion that the action of the Assembly in the premises, whatever that action may be, will naturally involve principles bearing on any similar case.

"While, therefore, your committee is of opinion that there is no ecclesiastical body in the land with which the Assembly could more profitably and cordially correspond and fraternize than with the General Conference of Maine, yet as the whole question which relates to correspondence with other churches at home and abroad, is one, in some of its aspects at least, of much interest, and concerning which, there exists considerable diversity of opinion, your committee respectfully recommend that the communication from the General Conference of Maine be laid on the table, subject to the call of any member of the house, and with the understanding that when called up, the whole subject of ecclesiastical correspondence shall, on motion, be open for discussion, and for the action of the Assembly."

The subject was afterwards called up, and it was *Resolved*, That the invitation from the General Conference of Maine, proposing the renewal of correspondence, be accepted. The Rev. Reuben Smith was elected the delegate to that Conference. Dr. Spring was appointed as his alternate.

We greatly rejoice in this decision. Our Church has suffered so much from allowing the bridge of her discipline to be broken down, and permitting those who did not even profess to adopt our standards of doctrine and order to enter our communion, not merely as correspondents, but as full and governing members of the Church, that we do not wonder at some manifestation of a disposition to go to the opposite extreme. As we have suffered from too intimate union, some are prepared for absolute non-intercourse. It seems, however, very plain that no intercourse with our fellow Christians ought to be repudiated, which does not endanger the doctrines or discipline which we are pledged to support. And it appears no less plain that our doctrine and discipline are secure, as far as this matter is concerned, so long as we do not admit to a participation in the government of the Church those who do not adopt our standards and submit to the government which they help to administer. The friendly intercourse kept up by an interchange of delegates between independent evangelical bodies, is a testimony before the world of union in all the esssential principles of the gospel. It is a public recognition of a brotherhood, which no one hesitates to acknowledge in private. It is an answer to the cavils of papists and infidels arising from the dissensions or sects of Protestants; and it tends to promote the feeling of which it is the expression. In other words, it

tends to promote true religion, and the glory of God. It moreover serves to remove prejudices and to diffuse correct information between the different portions of the great family of evangelical Christians. We, therefore, greatly rejoice that the General Assembly seems disposed to accept the hand of every follower of Christ, proffered to it as the expression of confidence and brotherly regard.

CHAPTER XVI.

DISCIPLINE.

§ 1. Revision of the Book.

a. Need of Revision. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. vii., sec. iii., especially par's. viii. and xvii.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, pp. 564, 592, &c.]

SOME eight or ten cases of this kind were presented to the Judicial Committee, but by the skill and wisdom of that body matters were so managed that all but three were arranged without being brought before the house. No. 1 was the complaint of the Church of Stillwater against the Synod of New Jersey.

The session of the Stillwater Church suspended one of their ruling elders. The ruling elder appealed to the presbytery, and the presbytery directed the session to restore him to office ; the session then complained to synod, and the synod sustained the presbytery. It was against the action of the synod the session now complains.

After a great deal of discussion, extending over parts of six days, Dr. Thornwell said he thought the whole question was one of technicalities, and moved that the complaint be sustained *pro forma*, and the session be directed to give Mr. Shafer (the suspended elder) a new trial. This motion was carried almost unanimously.

This is another lesson teaching what the Church seems slow to learn; that a body consisting of upwards of two hundred members is not a very suitable court of appeal. Lawyers tell us that the apparently anomalous plan of making the upper house of the Legislature the ultimate court of appeal in civil matters answered very well, because the house uniformly deferred to the judicial members, except in cases where

[* From article on *The General Assembly*, topic *Judicial Cases; Princeton Review*, 1856, p. 582.]

those members differed among themselves, and then the instinct of the lay members generally inclined them to take part with the right side. Such is not the constitution of our Assembly. It would be more of a parallel case if the appeal in civil matters were from the bench to the whole bar of a state assembled as a court, or if the House of Representatives of the United States were the supreme court of the Union. We believe the necessity for the appointment of a commission is forcing itself more and more on the conviction of the leading minds of our Church.

Another infelicity in our mode of conducting judicial cases was made very manifest on this occasion. This case was introduced on the fourth day of the sessions of the Assembly and decided on the tenth. When the case had been partly heard, other matters were taken up, and the whole subject driven from the minds of the members, and then it was resumed. This was done over and over again. It is obvious the case would have occupied much less time and been much better understood, could it have been heard continuously.

There is another point worthy of remark. It is impossible for any reader of the Minutes of the Assembly, or of the debates, to have the least idea of the merits of the case. The complaint is not given, neither the action of the presbytery nor of the synod is so stated that the reader can understand either the grounds or the justice of their decision. The only insight he can get is from the conflicting statements of the debaters.

We will venture still further to urge the necessity of the revision of our Book of Discipline. It is unintelligible, inconsistent, and in some of its parts unreasonable. This is proved beyond dispute from the fact that so much diversity of opinion exists as to its interpretation. We never knew of a judicial case brought before the Assembly where the mode of procedure did not create debate and confusion. Who are the original parties? is the question almost certain to be started, and just as certain to receive conflicting answers. In the present case, the moderator decided the session and the synod were the original parties.

But what can the word *original* then mean? The original parties must mean the parties concerned in the origin of the dispute; which in this case, were the elder and the session—another difficulty is, that in the great majority of cases there are no parties, in the sense of plaintiff and defendant. It seems unreasonable and anomalous to make the lower court a party. In civil matters, a lower tribunal does not appear at the bar of a higher, as a party to be tried. Its decision is reviewed—but the original litigants are the only parties, no matter how many steps there may be before the ultimate tribunal is reached. Would it not simplify matters if we adopted the same course?

Our plan is first to try the synod as a culprit, then the presbytery, then the session, and at last we get down to the original offender. No wonder we never fail to get into confusion.

The simple and natural course when a case is brought from a lower to a higher court is, to try the cause, and not the court. The thing to be done is to administer justice, that is, for example, to decide whether a member has been rightfully suspended. Why not do this directly, instead of indirectly? Why must we get at the ultimate point by first having the synod arraigned, accused by one party and defended by another, and then turned out of the house as a culprit, and when all is done, we have to see how the presbytery acted, and at last we get to the session. In the state, if a man brings a cause before a lower court, and it goes against him, he appeals to the superior court; if not satisfied, he takes it up to the Supreme Court, and, if still aggrieved, he goes to the Court of Errors. In every step he takes simply his cause; he does not drag all the courts with him. The case is re-heard at every step, and if injustice was done in the original decision, or in any of the subsequent ones, the matter is set right. The cause goes up with all the records in the case, and is decided on its merits. We cannot see why we should not adopt the same course. If a man is suspended unjustly, in his judgment, by a session, let him take the case to the presbytery, and have the case (not the session) tried over again. If not satisfied with the decision, let him go to the synod, and have the case (not the presbytery and session) re-heard; and, if still aggrieved, let him take the case to the Assembly, and have it (and not the synod, the presbytery and session) tried again. This, we are persuaded, would save a great deal of time and trouble, and deliver us from that labyrinth in which our higher courts never fail to get bewildered.

It is a natural consequence of making inferior courts parties, to put them out of the house, and deny them any voice in the ultimate decision of the case. What justice is there in this? If it is a question of fact or morals, or of doctrine, or of constitutional interpretation, they have as much right to be heard in the last resort as others. Suppose a Synod consists of three presbyteries, one with fifty members, another with twenty, and the third with ten, and that the first should unanimously pronounce a given doctrine heretical, then, in case of an appeal, sixteen members might set aside the judgment of fifty. Is there any sense or reason in this? Is it a personal matter with the presbytery any more than with the synod? Is a circuit judge excluded from his seat in the Supreme Court when his judgment is appealed from? This making lower courts parties, and denying them a voice in the final judgment, and, to cap the climax, turning them literally out of

the house, does appear to us a monstrous perversion of judicial principles.

There are several other points in which the obscurity of our book was manifested. What is meant by the synod, as a party, being fully heard? Dr. Rice said, it means hearing all that the members appointed by the synod to defend its judgment, had to say. The moderator decided it means hearing all that any member of the synod, present at the synodical decision, might wish to say. Again, it was disputed whether the complaint brought up the merits of the case; some said it did, others, with the moderator, said it did not; and yet it was so impossible to get on without bringing up the merits, that the moderator was forced to admit that "it seemed necessary that some little reference to the history of the case should be made!" Is not this pitiable? We do not blame our excellent moderator, whom everybody respects and loves; we blame the system. The whole process is disreputable. The session suspended an elder, no one knows why; no one knows whether it was done justly or unjustly, regularly or irregularly. The presbytery ordered the elder restored to office—no one knows why. The synod confirms the action of the presbytery, and the session complains to the Assembly—of what? we have not the slightest idea, and no one else can have, from the record. If the proceedings of a civil court, or of a court-martial, were so conducted, and so reported, what would the public think? Instead of being behind and below all other tribunals in the mode of administering justice, the Church courts should present a model for all other courts. This can never be done until we have a complete revision of our system.

b. Effective Methods for Revision. [*]

The Rev. Dr. Beatty moved that the Assembly take up the consideration of the Revised Book of Discipline, commenced in the last Assembly, and by it referred to this body. He proposed the adoption of the eighth chapter of the new book, with a view to its being sent down to the presbyteries. The Rev. Dr. Rice moved that the consideration of the subject be referred to the next Assembly. This motion was warmly seconded by Dr. Musgrave, and sustained by Drs. Elliott, Junkin, Nevin, and Messrs. Haskell, Kempshall, Miller, and others. It was opposed by Dr. Beatty, who urged that as the work had already been seven years on hand, it ought to be finally disposed of. Drs. Krebs, Lowrie, and Backus took the same view, but Dr. Rice's motion to postpone was adopted by a large majority. We do not know

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic, "*Revised Book of Discipline;*" *Princeton Review*, 1864, p. 513.]

that any surprise need be felt at this decision. In the first place, the General Assembly is a large body. Its *vis inertiæ* is great. It requires a great and continued force to set it in motion.

In the second place, in every such body, and in every community, there is a party opposed to all change. They are wedded to old ways, and cannot be persuaded that anything new is good. The old naval officers of England and America opposed the introduction of steam into the navy. It is not surprising therefore, when a man has trod the quarter deck as long as Dr. Musgrave has done, that he is disposed to pitch any new sailing orders into the sea without even looking at them. He has sailed in all weathers, and always got into port; he is therefore satisfied with things as they are. This class of men are very respectable, very strong, and very confident. With *them*, seeing is believing. It is no use to tell them that steam is surer and better than wind as a motive power. They have sailed too long to believe that a ship can go ahead against wind or tide, no matter how large "a tea kettle," (as an English Admiral called a steam engine,) she may have on board. These good men can be moved only by a *vis a tergo*. But move they must. Still for the time being they keep things steady. In the third place, not one in ten of the General Assembly knew anything of the new book. They had, therefore, no ground for judging of its merits. More effective than any other consideration was no doubt the desire to get rid of business. There is so much more to be done by every Assembly than can be done deliberately, that every item is stricken from the docket which can with any show of propriety be got rid of. There is also a latent consciousness that the General Assembly is not a fit body to frame a Book of Discipline, or to discuss its several provisions. Its members change year by year. Every question comes up new to every mind. It must decide on the first impression, or not at all. Congress might as well be expected, in the midst of the pressure of all other business, to frame a constitution, as the General Assembly wisely to frame a new Book of Discipline.

There are only two ways, as it seems to us, that this work can be well done. The one is, to have a convention called for the purpose, to sit two or three weeks; and when they have settled everything to their satisfaction, send it down to the presbyteries to be ratified or rejected. Thus our national constitution was framed. The other method is, for the presbyteries to take the Revised Book and carefully consider, amend. or reject it; and then for the Assembly to act definitively under their guidance. The work of deliberation must be done either in a convention, or in the presbyteries. It cannot be done in the Assembly; and the plan of having it done by a committee of eight or ten, experience shows will not answer. The reasons for the alterations are presented to

too few minds. The mass of those who are called to judge and decide have not considered the several points to be determined, and they cannot be expected to act blindly. That something must be done, we are fully persuaded. Our present book is confused, contradictory, and impracticable. It cannot be acted upon, without a consumption of time that is intolerable. In every Assembly where judicial business is to be transacted, there are confusion, and disorder,—decisions which shock and offend, first one party and then another, all because the book itself is what it is. It is no answer to this to say that our present book was framed by great and good men. So was the constitution of England the work of great men. But it must be altered or overthrown to suit the change in men and things. And our old book, we are persuaded, must be altered, or our whole system will utterly break down. That a Church of three thousand ministers shall be occupied, as it may be for days, or even weeks, in its General Assembly, in determining the merits of a petty slander case, in any village in the Union, is a solecism not to be longer endured.

§ 2. Citation of Judicatories. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. vii., sec. i., par's. v. and vi.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 541; Comp. chap. v., sec. ix.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 525.]

On Thursday, May 25, Mr. Plummer, from the committee on the Pittsburg memorial, made a final report, recommending that the Assembly take up and decide upon the items in the memorial relating to Church order and discipline. The report was accepted. In pursuance of this plan, he subsequently moved the adoption of the following resolutions, viz.

1. That the proper steps be now taken to cite to the bar of the next Assembly such inferior judicatories as are charged by common fame with irregularities.

2. That a special committee be appointed to ascertain what inferior judicatories are thus charged by common fame; to prepare charges and specifications against them; and to digest a suitable plan of procedure in the matter, and that said committee be requested to report as soon as practicable.

3. That as citation, on the foregoing plan, is the commencement of process involving the right of membership in the Assembly, therefore,

Resolved, That agreeably to a principle laid down, chap. v. sec. 9, of the Form of Government, the members of the said judicatories be excluded from a seat in the next General Assembly until their case shall be decided.

The adoption of these resolutions was opposed by Messrs. Jessup, White, Beman, Dickinson, Peters, and M'Auley; and advocated by Messrs. Plumer, Breckinridge, and Baxter. After a debate occupying most of the time on Thursday afternoon and Friday morning and afternoon, the question was taken and decided in the affirmative, *yeas* 128, *nays* 122.

[* From article on *The General Assembly*, same topic; *Princeton Review*, 1837, p. 436.]

The resolutions were opposed on various grounds. 1. It was denied that the Assembly possessed original jurisdiction such as it is now proposed to exercise. The fifth paragraph of sec. 1, in the chapter on Review and Control, is the strong hold of those who contend that the resolutions are constitutional. But what is the case contemplated in that article? It is, that there has already been some irregularity, in the proceedings of the lower judicatory, either apparent in the records, or proclaimed by common fame. This undoubtedly refers to a case of judical action, or erroneous or defective record, or a case adjudicated in such a manner that the trumpet of common fame proclaims it wrong, and such that it can plainly be proved to be wrong before the superior judicatory. In the circumstances specified in the constitution, it would be right for you to cite a synod to appear before you and answer and show what they have done in relation to the matter in question, in a case that has been before them. And after hearing their answer, you are to send the case back to them, with directions to do what the constitution and justice require. The words are "After which," that is, after the citation and answer, not after a trial, for the rule says nothing about a trial; but supposes that the case is sent back for trial to the judicatory which is cited. We cannot try and punish here. Suppose we were to cite the Synod of Virginia, for heresy, in maintaining, in the face of all the former decisions of the General Assembly, that slavery is consistent with the Scriptures and the institutions of the Presbyterian Church. Well, our committee, we will suppose, have cited that synod. Then they must send down all the budget of charges they have collected, to tell the synod they must stay these irregular proceedings, on penalty of exclusion from the Church. Every one knows that this cannot be the correct interpretation of the rule. Otherwise, it will make you a court of original jurisdiction, with power to cut off ministers, directly contrary to every provision of the book.

2. But admitting that, under certain circumstances, you have the authority to cite a synod, how do you get the right to cite a presbytery? The rule says, "the next superior judicatory," which limits it to the one immediately above. This provision is in the chapter on Review and Control, and it can give authority only by the express meaning of the words. The session is under review and control of the presbytery, the presbytery of the synod, and the synod of the General Assembly; because they only have the legal right to inspect their records. The General Assembly is, therefore, constitutionally restricted to action on the synods. Unless you can show, by some new ecclesiastical multiplication table, that the General Assembly is next above a presbytery or session or individual member, you have no right to issue a citation to them, and it would be an act of usurpation in you to do it. The General

Assembly has indeed power to *reprove*. But can we not reprove without citation and conviction? We can reprove immorality in the South and in the North, on mere report, without alleging that any individual is guilty, and so without conviction. The power to cite presbyteries and Church sessions is not the same with warning and reproving; and is in terms given to another body, to the next superior judicatory. If you cite a presbytery to appear here, they will file their plea in bar, that you have no authority, and they will not answer. We have no right thus to take away the constitutional rights of synods, or to strike out, by a mere vote of the Assembly, an important word from the constitution. If we can interfere with presbyteries, by the same argument we may interfere with the sessions.

3. A third objection, is the mode of proceeding. If these charges were against individuals, we should know how to proceed. But that this great court of errors should leave its proper judicial business to hunt up criminals, is most extraordinary. You appoint a committee to find out offences, and then to find out the offenders. Are this committee to be clothed with the plenary powers of a Presbyterian inquisition, to cite and try whom they please, and on what ground they please? Are they to report to you every rumour which the blast of the trumpet of common fame may blow over the land in any direction? Or by what rule are they to discriminate? We wish to know, and the churches ought to know, whether this committee are to be clothed with preliminary judicial powers. If so, in what do they differ from the prerogatives of an inquisition, except that the civil arm withholds its power? Or what better is a Protestant than a Roman Catholic inquisition? Our judicatories are, in fact, to be tried by this committee, without opportunity of defence; to be first adjudged delinquent, and then deprived of their seats; while it is perfectly understood by the commissioners from certain other judicatories, concerning whose irregularities common fame is at least equally loud, that if they will support this measure, no reports shall be entertained concerning them by the committee, and no words of reproof administered by the Assembly.

The whole mode of procedure is moreover unnecessary. Our constitution has made ample provision for the correction of all errors and disorders. Our system is very complete. Cast your eye down to the source of power in our Church, the body of the people, and see an organized succession of Church courts, guarding the interests of truth, and securing order and purity up to the General Assembly. Then look the other way, and see a system of control and supervision, going down in regular gradations, from the General Assembly to the synods, from synods to presbyteries, from presbyteries to individual ministers

and Church sessions, and from sessions to every individual member of the Presbyterian Church. What can be more complete than this system? Why do we want nullification here? What interest is not guarded? What exigency is not provided for? There never was a government that had a provision for every case, like our government. For a case like the present, where an occasional majority, a mere factitious majority, are determined to perpetuate the power of the Church in their own hands, and conscious that unless they do it now, Providence will never give them another opportunity, we grant the constitution has not provided.

The proposition to exclude from the next General Assembly the commissioners of all those judicatories which your committee may think proper to cite, is still more obviously an outrage upon the constitution. Chap. v, sect. 9, to which the resolution refers, gives no warrant for such a proceeding. That whole chapter relates to a specific subject, to process against a minister. Is the process, which you are about to issue, against any member of the next Assembly? No man is a member of the Assembly, until he is commissioned as such by his presbytery. And when a man comes here with his commission from a presbytery, he comes with authority paramount to all the authority which one General Assembly can have over another. Your committee of commissions are bound by them, and not by the votes of former Assemblies. In chap. iv. the provision authorizing a Church session to suspend a member, under process, from communion, tallies exactly with that respecting the trial of a minister. Here is, in each case, an express authority for laying persons charged under a disability during trial. Where is the authority for laying a judicatory under disability? What has this General Assembly to do in the case at any rate? We have not to try them. When the next General Assembly come up, if they find themselves in such a position that it would be a disgrace to religion to allow the membership of such and such persons, they might possibly pass a vote of exclusion. But what have *we* to do with the regulations of the next General Assembly? This is not a perpetual body like a synod or presbytery. The members of the next Assembly will come up with their commission from the presbyteries, and how can your committee of commissions exclude them from their seats? Besides, why should we punish presbyteries? This suspension of the right of representation is a real punishment. Why punish the presbyteries when only the synod is cited? Or are we to have a new measure wedge so beveled as to split only on one side, and so as to save such presbyteries in the synods cited as are of a fair, orthodox complexion, and let them remain in good standing? If that is the plan, we should like to see the warrant for it in the book. To illustrate the character

of this high-handed and overbearing measure—a measure hitherto unparalleled in the history of legislative or judicial proceedings—suppose that one of these United States should come into collision with the national government, on some point, what would be said if the government should propose, as a first step, to cite a sovereign state to appear at the bar of congress, and then appoint a committee to act as the scavengers of common fame, and bring into congress an ass-load of such matters as common fame deals in, for trial; and to crown the whole, propose during the pendency of the process, to deprive the representatives of that state from their seat in the next congress? Why, the next congress would puff at such a resolution, just as the next General Assembly will puff your vote to deprive its commissioners of their seats. They will look at the commissions of the presbyteries, and will run over the puny and ineffectual legislation of this Assembly, just as a railroad car, impelled by a powerful locomotive, runs over a rye straw that may lie across its track.

The advocates of the resolutions argued substantially thus. The main question relates of course to the power of the Assembly. Has it the right to act in the manner proposed, viz., to summon inferior judicatories to its bar, and to institute and issue process against them? We maintain that it has both in virtue of specific provisions of the constitution, and of the general nature of our system. As to the first point, it is very plain. It has been said, on the other side, that the Assembly is a mere court of errors, and possesses no original jurisdiction. This, however, is not the fact. It is a court of general review and control. It can direct its eye over the whole Church, and wherever it sees evils to be corrected, it can correct them. The mode in which it is to be informed of such evils, and the mode of correction are definitely prescribed. The ordinary means of conveying such information are the complaints, appeals and references of lower judicatories, or of their members, or the review of records. But there may be cases which none of these reach; an express provision is made to meet such cases. "Inferior judicatories," says the Book of Discipline, chap. 7, sec. i., 5, "may sometimes entirely neglect to perform their duty; by which neglect, heretical opinions or corrupt practices may be allowed to gain ground, or offenders of a very gross character may be suffered to escape; or some circumstances in their proceedings, of very great irregularity, may not be distinctly recorded by them; in any of which cases their records will by no means exhibit to the superior judicatory a full view of their proceedings. If, therefore, the superior judicatory be well advised by *common fame*, that such irregularities or neglects have occurred on the part of the inferior judicatory, it is incumbent on them to take cognizance of the same, and to examine, deliberate and judge

in the whole matter as completely as if it had been recorded, and thus brought up by the review of the records." Here is not merely the authority, but the command to do precisely what these resolutions propose. When common fame, says the rule, informs the superior judicatory of the existence of error or disorder, it is incumbent on that judicatory to take cognizance thereof, and to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter. Common fame has informed this Assembly of the existence of irregularities of a very serious nature. Not vague, uncertain rumour, but definite statements, which, we are morally sure, are correct. We know that there are many synods embracing churches not regularly organized, ministers and elders who never have adopted our Confession of Faith. We know that these and other evils have been long continued and widely extended, and we propose to act in relation to them precisely as the Book of Discipline directs. The first step, says the rule, to be taken is, "to cite the judicatory alleged to have offended to appear at a specified time and place." Well, sir, is not this precisely what we propose to do?

It is objected, however, that this whole rule refers to a case of judicial action in the court below, a special case improperly adjudicated, the knowledge of which is brought to the superior court, which is then authorized to examine into it and order it to be rectified. There is, however, no such limitation; and it would be preposterous that there should be. The rule specifies any "neglect or irregularity," which covers the whole ground, and does not confine the power of the superior court to specific cases of improper or irregular decisions. If it were known that Socinianism was allowed to be openly professed by the members of some of our presbyteries, may such presbyteries escape all interference or control by simply doing nothing, by neglecting all notice of such departures from the truth and all record on their minutes? Would not the superior court, under the rule which directs that when, from the neglect of a judicatory to perform its duty, heretical opinions or corrupt practices are allowed to gain ground, it is incumbent on the superior judicatory to take cognizance of the same, and to examine and judge in the whole matter, have a right to cite such negligent judicatory and examine into the case? This is the precise case for which the rule was made.

But again it is asked, "What can you do, if you do cite? you can only remit the charges and tell the inferior judicatory they must correct their irregularities. You cannot try and punish here." Suppose this to be true, what has it to do with the question? The objection has reference to the mode of issuing the case, and not to the right, or to the mode of commencing the process. The resolution on the very face of it, professes to be the first step in the process. When the judicatories

cited appear at your bar, the first question to be decided will be, are the charges sustained? and the second, how is the cause to be disposed of? It will be time enough then to decide, whether the Assembly shall "deliberate and judge in the whole matter," or send the case down to the implicated judicatories with an injunction to correct the evils complained of. The objection, to say the least of it, is premature. It would be absurd however that a court should have the power to decide, and then be obliged to leave the execution of their decision to the option of the court below. The superior judicatory has undoubtedly the right to see that its decisions are carried into effect. This however is not now the point. The simple question is about citation.

The perfect regularity of the course proposed is so plain that it is in various ways admitted by the brethren on the other side, as far as synods are concerned; the grand objection is that the right of citation is confined to the judicatory next above, and consequently that the General Assembly has no authority to cite a presbytery. To this objection it would be a sufficient answer to say that the resolutions make no mention of presbyteries. They simply recommend the appointment of a committee to ascertain whether there are sufficient grounds to cite any inferior judicatories to your bar. If that committee should, in their report, go beyond synods, and recommend the citation of presbyteries, it would be time enough to object to the adoption of such recommendation, that the Assembly had no immediate jurisdiction over the presbyteries; that they could be reached only through the synods. But, if in the ascending series of our system of Church courts, so highly praised by the eloquent gentleman on the other side, a synod may be omitted in case of appeal, complaint, or reference, and the cause be brought directly from the presbytery to the Assembly, as is constantly allowed, can any good reason be assigned, why, in the descending series, a synod may not in like manner be passed over, and the Assembly act immediately on the presbytery? It is indeed proper and expedient, in the great majority of cases, that both in ascending and descending the cause should go regularly up or down through the several courts, but this is not always the case. There are occasions when it is just as necessary, for the sake of speedy justice, that the highest court should act on a remotely inferior one, as that an appeal should come directly from the latter to the former. The book renders it *incumbent* on the next superior judicatory to take cognizance of the neglect of the court below, but this does not forbid the highest court from interfering when any special emergency renders it necessary or desirable. If, while the Assembly was actually in session, a presbytery should decide that they would depose any of their ministers who should preach the doctrine of

the trinity, we suspect few men on this floor would think it necessary to wait for the synod to interfere, especially if they had reason to believe the synod would sustain the decision.

Besides, it has been generally understood that the brethren opposite entertained different opinions as to the power of the Assembly from those which they now express. It was supposed they believed that this body could stretch its long arm over a synod and reach a presbytery, and even make and unmake it at pleasure. It is not many years since they actually exercised this power, and in known opposition to the wishes of a synod, constituted a new presbytery within its bounds. They were understood then to teach that the Assembly was clothed with plenary powers; that as a synod included presbyteries it possessed their powers in a wider sphere, and that the General Assembly, including both synods and presbyteries, might do all that either could do, within the whole compass of the Church. Can these brethren complain if we should assume this matter as a *res adjudicata?* Must they cry out the moment their own principles are commended to their acceptance? Do they suppose that the constitution means one thing when they are in the majority, and another when they are in the minority? One brother indeed, (Mr. E. White,) all but avows this principle. He says, "The act of the General Assembly erecting a presbytery in this city was null and void, and, in my view, the Synod of Philadelphia acted right in nullifying the procedure," though he voted to condemn the synod, and to enforce the act he pronounces null and void. Such candour, however, is unusual. Taking then the extreme supposition that the Assembly had not, by the constitution, the right to act directly upon presbyteries, yet as these brethren have legalized the opposite interpretation, they would have no reason to complain if we should now act upon it. We say this, however, merely on the supposition that the case of citation of a presbytery is parallel to that of creating such a body. This we do not admit, and therefore are not prepared to allow that even those who have hitherto condemned the erection of a presbytery by the General Assembly, are inconsistent in advocating the right of citation.* The constitution is not a donation of powers, it is a limitation of them. The General Assembly does not derive its powers from the constitution, but from the delegation of the presbyteries. It is the presbyteries in Assembly collected. It is therefore an un-

* We think it right to say that we have never agreed with many of our brethren in the opinion that the Assembly has not, under any circumstances, the right to form a presbytery, without consent of the synod or synods to which its constituent members belong. We believe the erection of the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia was unconstitutional, not because of want of power in the Assembly, but on account of the mode in which they exercised their authority.

sound principle that the Assembly has no right to exercise any power not expressly granted. It has the right to do any thing in the discharge of its duties as a supreme judicatory and supervising body of the Church, which the constitution does not forbid. The presbyteries have limited and circumscribed the inherent powers of this body. We have no right to pass those limits. We can do nothing the constitution forbids, but we can do a vast many things which it does not enjoin. This whole discussion, however, is premature. Should the proposed committee recommend the citation of presbyteries, we can then decide whether we have the right to cite them or not.

The principal objection, however, is directed against the resolution which proposes that the members of judicatories cited should be excluded from a seat in the next Assembly. The argument on which this resolution is supported may be very briefly stated. It is readily admitted that there is no express warrant for such a proceeding in the Book of Discipline. The authority for it, however, is not the less clear and satisfactory. The constitution expressly recognizes the right of a superior judicatory to cite and try an inferior one. This is admitted. But the constitution makes no specific directions how the trial is to be conducted. Does it follow that it cannot be conducted at all? Does the constitution recognize a right, and impose a duty, and then, by mere silence, preclude the possibility of exercising the right, or discharging the duty? Certainly not. If the Assembly has the right of trying, it has the right of ordering the trial, and, in the absence of special limitations or directions, must be guided by the nature of our system, by precedent, and the general principles of law and justice. The constitution of the United States confers on the senate the right of trying public officers when impeached, but it prescribes no mode of procedure. Must the proceedings therefore stop, or be arrested at every step by the demand of an express warrant to collect testimony, to take depositions, or to send for persons and papers? When the right to try is conferred, every thing else is left to be regulated by precedent, the general principles of law, and the necessities of the case. In like manner the constitution recognizes the right of congress to preserve its own authority; but where is the warrant for its committees of investigation, for its power of arrest, its right of expelling its own members? There is no more reasonable and universally recognized principle than that a grant of power implies a grant of all that is requisite for its legitimate exercise. When therefore our constitution recognizes the right of the Assembly to cite and try inferior judicatories, it recognizes the right to conduct such trial. It prescribes minutely the method to be adopted when an individual is on trial before a session or presbytery, but it gives scarcely any directions for the mode of proceeding when a judi-

catory is on trial. The only course therefore to be taken is to consult the nature of our system, and the general rules of justice and propriety. In our system we find the principle distinctly recognized that when a man is on trial before a judicatory, he ceases to have a right to a seat in that judicatory, until his cause is issued; and still further, that even when the decisions of an inferior court are under review in the superior one, the members of the former are excluded from their seats. These, especially the former, are not merely constitutional rules, but they are self-evidently just and reasonable. Now by parity of reasoning, when a synod is on trial before this house, its members have no right to a seat in it. The resolution refers to chap. v. sect. 9, of the Book of Discipline, for no other purpose than to show that the constitution recognizes the correctness of the principle upon which the Assembly proposes to act. As to the objection that the judicatories in question are not on trial before this Assembly, and that the next Assembly may disregard our decision, we answer that these judicatories are placed on trial the moment they are cited; the citation is the commencement of a judicial process, and the next Assembly will be as much bound to regard the preliminary decision of this house, as its final decision. When this house decides that there is sufficient ground to cite a particular synod, and to suspend its members from a right to a seat, its decision is as much obligatory, as when it decides in the issue of a case on the final deposition or excommunication of a person or persons regularly on trial. Its decisions may be puffed at; but it will be in violation of the provision of the constitution and of justice, that no judicial decision shall be reversed, except by regular process.

§ 3. Appeals and Complaints.

a. Appeals in Cases not Judicial. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. vii., sec. ii., par. 1, *Digest* of 1873, p. 548.]

A. D. Metcalf and others complained against the Synod of Virginia, for deciding that appeals may lie in cases not judicial. The decision complained of, the reasons of complaint assigned by the complainants, and the whole record of the synod in the case were read. The two parties, the complainants and the synod, having been heard, the roll was called that each member of the Assembly might have an opportunity of expressing his opinion. After which the vote was taken and the complaint was sustained. That is, the General Assembly decided that appeals cannot lie except in judicial cases.

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;* topic, "*Complaint of A. D. Metcalf and others against the Synod of Virginia;*"—*Princeton Review*, 1839, p. 429.]

We regret that it is not in our power to present such a view of this case, as we have been accustomed to give on similar occasions. We have no statement, in the Minutes, of the nature of the question decided by the Synod of Virginia; nor any report of the arguments for and against sustaining the complaint. We are obliged, therefore, to content ourselves with the following remarks on the principle involved in the above decision of the Assembly.

As this subject has already been discussed at some length in our pages,* it may seem unnecessary to say any more on the subject. As, however, the recent decision has again brought it before the churches, it may not be improper to devote a few pages to its consideration. It is really a matter of importance. It would be a hard case if a party, suffering under a grievous wrong, should be turned away from the bar of our highest judicatory, merely on the ground that he had mistaken the nature of his remedy. The history of this question is a little curious. We have had a superior judicatory in our Church for more than a hundred and twenty years. During about seventy years of this period, our discipline was conducted according to the Westminster Directory. In 1789 our present constitution went into operation; which was submitted to an extensive revision and alteration, as to matters of detail, in 1821. Under these several systems, appeals and complaints were allowed without hindrance or contradiction, from any kind of decision in an inferior judicatory by a person who felt himself aggrieved, until 1834. Then, for the first time in our history, as far as we know, the idea was started that appeals and complaints could be made only in cases strictly judicial.

The occasion on which this doctrine was advanced was the following: The Synod of Philadelphia had passed an act by which they first received the Second Presbytery as organized by the Assembly; secondly, united that presbytery with the Presbytery of Philadelphia; and, thirdly, divided this united presbytery by a geographical line. From this act the Assembly's presbytery appealed and complained. When the case came before the Assembly the Rev. Samuel G. Winchester, in an ingenious and eloquent speech, which was afterwards published in various forms, took the ground that "it is only from the decisions of a judicatory sitting as a court, for judicial business, that appeals and complaints can be entertained?" That this novel doctrine was not at that time the doctrine of the synod, which the Rev. gentleman defended, is plain, from the fact, that they had referred for adjudication to that very Assembly "An appeal and complaint of the Fifth Church, Philadelphia, relative to the call of Dr. Beman." † That venerable body

* See *Biblical Repertory*, 1835, January and April Numbers, [articles on "*New Ecclesiastical Law*," by Dr. Samuel Miller.]

† Minutes of the Assembly of 1834, p. 8.

therefore, could hardly be surprised that the Assembly overruled Mr. Winchester's plea, and proceeded to exercise a jurisdiction which had been thus explicitly recognised by the very body in whose behalf the plea was urged. Though the synod was thus free from this new doctrine in May 1834, it grew in such sudden favour, that when that body met the following autumn, they decided not merely that appeals and complaints could not lie except in judicial cases, but even that protests were in the same predicament. This is an instructive illustration of the fact that the wisest and best men sometimes allow themselves to be run away with by a plausible idea, though contrary to all their own previous professions and practice. This, however, was a mere temporary delusion. The members of that synod who had signed or allowed protests in all kinds of cases before, still continued to sign or allow them, with equal freedom, their own decision to the contrary notwithstanding. We had fondly hoped that the whole doctrine was quietly forgotten. We had good reason for this hope. We found its very authors and advocates disregarding it the very next year; acting as though no such doctrine had ever been broached. If they practically abandoned it as untenable, we may be excused for feeling some surprise at its resurrection in a new and distant quarter. It is, however, shorn of its just proportions. The Synod of Philadelphia extended the doctrine to appeals, complaints and protests. Thus putting minorities completely under the feet of majorities, not allowing them even the right of recording their dissent with the reasons for it. Mr. Winchester confined the doctrine to appeals and complaints; these Virginia gentlemen to appeals alone. In this last form it is certainly less objectionable than in either of the others.

In order to understand this matter, we must know precisely what is meant by judicial decisions, to which it is said, appeals and complaints, or appeals alone, are confined. There is a good deal of confusion and error often occasioned by the mere designation of our ecclesiastical bodies as courts or judicatories. They are so called when not sitting in judicial capacity. We find lawyers much troubled to know what we mean by courts; and disposed to run analogies between the different civil tribunals and those found in our Church. This has been a fruitful source of mistakes as to the nature of our form of government.

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If our system and nomenclature trouble the lawyers, it is no less true that the lawyers trouble us. They often bring with them into ecclesiastical bodies modes of thinking and reasoning borrowed from their previous pursuits, which are entirely inappropriate to our system.

Our good brother, Winchester, will excuse our saying this is precisely his difficulty. His whole printed speech on the subject before us, is distinguished by this lawyer-like kind of reasoning; a strenuous insisting on the precise legal sense of terms, and thence deriving a rule of construction which makes the constitution speak a language which it was never intended to speak.

Our courts are bodies *sui generis;* they include within themselves legislative, executive and judicial powers. Yet this division is in a great measure arbitrary. These several powers are but different modes of exercising the general governing authority in the Church; and it is often very difficult to say whether a particular act should be placed under the one or the other of these heads. Still the classification, though not so definite as might be desired, is useful. To the exercise of legislative powers are referred the numerous rules which constitute our Form of Government, which were enacted in a certain prescribed way. To the same head belongs the various standing rules, which, though they form no part of the constitution, are of force until properly repealed; such, for example, as the rules which regulate the reception of foreign ministers, &c. The head of executive powers is the most comprehensive of all, as to it belongs almost every act, except such as concern the exercise of discipline, which is designed to carry into effect the various provisions of our complicated system. Hence the examination, the licensing, ordaining, installing, dismissing ministers; the erection, division, and dissolution of churches, presbyteries and synods, are all executive acts. On the other hand, "the judicial power of the Church," says Principal Hill, of Scotland, "appears in the infliction or removal of those censures which belong to a spiritual society." This passage has been quoted as defining the nature of those acts from which alone complaints and appeals can properly be taken. The class of acts contemplated, therefore, is that which concerns the infliction or removal of ecclesiastical censures. That this is a correct statement of the case, further appears from the nature of the arguments by which this doctrine is sustained. These arguments are derived from the words *cause, trial, sentence, parties,* &c., which occur in the chapter which treats of appeals and complaints, and which, it is said, determine the nature of the cases from which an appeal may lie, or against which a complaint may be made.

The definition given above of judicial acts, viz: that they are such as relate to the infliction or removal of ecclesiastical censures, is, however, far from being complete. A Church court often sits in a judicial capacity, without any reference either to the infliction or removal of censure. Take the case before the last Assembly. The Synod of Virginia decided that an appeal could lie in cases not judicial. Mr. A. D. Metcalf, and others complain of this decision. The

matter comes before the Assembly. That body, being duly warned by the moderator that it is about to sit in its judicial capacity, hears what the synod has to say in defence of its decision, and what the complain ants had to say against it, and then gave their judgment. The Assembly acted judicially; it sat in judgment on the decision of a lower court. Yet it neither inflicted nor removed any ecclesiastical censure. The Synod of Virginia was no more censured by having its decision reversed, than a district court of the United States is censured when the supreme court reverses its opinion on a point of law. There are, therefore, a multitude of cases in which our courts act judicially, which are not judicial cases, in the sense of the above-cited definition; cases in which there is no offence, no offender, no testimony, and no trial in the ordinary sense of the terms. Besides, a case which is properly executive in one stage, may become judicial in another stage of its progress. Or to speak more correctly, any executive act of a lower court may be made the subject of judicial examination in a higher one. Thus, for example, when the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, as organized by the Assembly, divided the Fifth Presbyterian Church in that city, contrary to the wishes of the majority of the people, Thomas Bradford, and others of the aggrieved party, brought the matter before the Assembly of 1835. There the case was regularly adjudicated; both parties were heard, and the decision was reversed. This new doctrine, therefore, rests upon a very unstable basis. It is founded on an imperfect classification of the acts of our judicatories; and assumes that the judicial function has reference to the mere infliction or removal of censures.

Let us examine the nature of the arguments which have been adduced in support of this new doctrine. Our constitution says, "That every kind of decision which is formed in any Church judicatory, except the highest, is subject to the review of a superior judicatory, and may be carried up in one or the other of the four following ways: 1. General review and control; 2. Reference; 3. Appeal; and 4. Complaint." The question is, what is the meaning of this plain declaration? It does not mean, because it does not say, that every individual decision, but *every kind* of decision may be carried up in either of these four ways. These different forms of redress contemplate different circumstances, and are not all available in every particular case. A reference, for example, must be made by the body itself, and not by an individual member; but the body may refer any kind of case. An appeal supposes an aggrieved party, but he may appeal from any kind of decision which directly affects himself. A complaint supposes some kind of impropriety in the act complained of, but it may be entered against any kind of act alleged to be improper. So that any kind of

decision may be regularly brought up in each of the several ways specified above. That this is the true meaning of this article, might be inferred with certainty from the fact that it has always been so understood and acted upon; and that it is almost a literal transcript of the Scottish rule on the same subject, which has always been interpreted and applied in the same way. We are now told, however, that this is not its meaning; that we must lay particular stress on the word *or*. 'Every kind of decision may be carried up in one *or* the other of the four following ways;' one kind in one way and another kind in another way. In the Scotch rule, however, whence ours was taken, there is no *or*. Principal Hill gives it thus: "Every ecclesiastical business that is transacted in any Church judicatory is subject to the review of its ecclesiastical superiors, and may be brought before the court immediately above in four different ways, by review, by reference, by appeal, and by complaint." If, therefore, the emendators of our book had left out the little word, and said; "Every kind of decision may be carried up in four different ways, review, reference, appeal and complaint;" there would have been an end of the matter; or rather, there never could have been a beginning to the new doctrine. Yet who can doubt that this is precisely what they meant to say, who compares the two rules, and remembers, that our practice, both before and since the emendation, was precisely, as far as the point now in debate is concerned, the same as that of the Scotch Church?

The main dependence of the advocates of the new doctrine, is upon the language employed in directing how an appeal is to be prosecuted. It is argued that where there has been no trial, strictly speaking, in the court below, there can be no appeal, because an appeal, is the removal of a cause already decided, from the inferior to the superior judicatory; secondly, because it is said that all persons who have submitted to a trial have a right to appeal; thirdly, because the grounds of appeal are stated to be such as partiality, the refusal of testimony, haste or injustice in the decision; fourthly, because the book directs that, in hearing an appeal, the following steps are to be taken, viz., to read the sentence, then the reasons, then the records including the testimony, then to hear first the original parties, and afterwards the members of the inferior judicatory. If this argument is valid in relation to appeals, it is no less so in its application to complaints. For if an appeal is the removal of a cause already decided, so a complaint is "another method by which a cause decided in an inferior judicatory may be carried before a superior." The grounds of complaint contemplate "parties at the bar," injustice of the judgment, &c. The steps also in the prosecution of a complaint are substantially the same as in case of appeal; the sentence is to be read, then the reasons, then the

records including the testimony, then the parties are to be heard, &c., &c. The only difference between these modes of redress are the following. First, a complaint does not arrest the operation of a decision against which it is entered; and, secondly, an appeal can be made only by an aggrieved party; whereas a complaint can be made by any member of the court who disapproves of the decision. They do not differ at all as to the kind of decisions against which they are available. The same mode of arguing is equally applicable to the case of references. For a reference is defined to be a *judicial* representation of a case not yet decided. The superior judicatory, it is said, may remit the *cause* referred; and the inferior court is directed, in cases of reference, to send up all the testimony, in order that the higher court may consider and decide the case. It is evident, therefore, that we cannot, without the greatest inconsistency, stop half way in this matter. If the use of the words cause, parties, testimony, sentence, &c., under the head of appeals, shows that they must be confined to judicial cases; it proves the same with regard to complaints and references; and our whole system of government is overturned.

The fallacy of the above method of reasoning will appear from the following remarks. In the first place, these technical terms are to be understood, not according to their use in civil courts, but according to our own ecclesiastical usage. Our bodies are called courts; their decisions are called judgments; the matters brought before them are called cases. Are we to infer from this, as has been done by the New School lawyers and brethren, that they have nothing but judicial powers; that they are mere bodies for the administration of justice? The constitution says, indeed, that they are charged with the government of the churches, yet as civil courts have nothing to do with governing, it is insisted upon that ours can have nothing to do with it. This arguing from technical terms, and giving them a sense foreign to the peculiar nature of our ecclesiastical system, can produce nothing but confusion and embarrassment.

In the second place, our rules were drawn up with special reference to that class of cases which is of most frequent occurrence, and hence the language employed is adapted to such cases. Are we to infer, however, from the fact that the book directs the inferior judicatory, in cases of reference, to send up the testimony, that no case can be referred but one in which there is testimony to be presented? Yet this is the argument upon which so much stress is laid. It is, that because the rules, which relate to appeals, direct that the sentence should be read, and the testimony produced, there can be no appeal where there has not been a judicial sentence, and where there is no testimony. This is exactly the argument made on the floor of the Assembly in 1837 by Dr. Beman, in opposition to the motion to cite certain synods to answer

for their irregularities. He insisted that the Assembly should look at the book and abide by it to the letter. But to what part of the constitution did he refer the house? Not to that which contains the radical principles of our system, which enjoins on the higher courts to take effectual care that the constitution is observed, but to the rules of detail. And sure enough, as might have been expected, these rules do contemplate some specific erroneous decision, and consequently direct that the delinquent judicatory should be cited to show what it had done "in the case in question," after which the whole case was to be remitted to the said judicatory to be disposed of in a constitutional manner. It was hence argued that although the power of calling inferior courts to the bar, and seeing that they conformed to the constitution, was clearly recognized, yet the Church had by these rules of detail, effectually tied her own hands. A specific irregular act might be called up, and sent back for correction, but the synods themselves were beyond the reach of the Assembly. They might cherish what disorders they pleased; recognize what churches or presbyteries they pleased, trample on the constitution as they pleased, the Assembly could do nothing but correct specific acts in detail. This argument is just as good as that which is now urged about appeals or complaints. The argument is, that the rules of process limit the exercise of the right to those particular cases, in which every one of the rules can be applied.

In the third place it is a fallacy running through this argument that there can be no judicial investigation of anything but a judicial act. An appeal or complaint is indeed a judicial process. Hence it is referred to the judicial committee; and the members of the court are warned, when it comes on for decision, that they are about to sit in their judicial capacity. This, however, proves nothing as to the nature of the act appealed from. The higher court is called to sit in judgment on the constitutionality, wisdom, or justice of a particular act of the court below; it matters not whether that act itself were judicial or executive. If anybody was injured by it, he has a right to appeal from it, and have his brethren judge of its propriety. That our constitution contemplated such appeals is evident from the fact that it provides that an appeal shall suspend the operation of the decision appealed from, except it be a sentence of suspension, excommunication, or deposition. This is just as much as to say, except in judicial cases; for suspension, excommunication, and deposition are the only sentences, worth naming, which our courts are competent to pass. If then these are excepted from arrest in their operation by an appeal, all are excepted, unless an appeal may lie from other than strictly judicial decisions. It is evident, therefore, that such decisions form but one class of those acts from which an appeal can be taken.

Finally, if it can be shown that all the requisitions of the book may be fully complied with in cases of appeals from executive acts, then there is an end of the argument; as the whole argument rests on the supposed incompatibility of those rules with such appeals. Let us take for illustration either of the appeals presented in 1835 by Thomas Bradford and others. The presbytery had divided the Fifth Church of Philadelphia against its will, erecting two new churches, and giving a name to neither. The church felt itself aggrieved; it believed that not only the spiritual interests of the congregation, but the title to the property was injuriously affected by the decision. They had therefore the right not only to have it reviewed, but arrested. They accordingly appealed. The papers were referred to the judicial committee, and found to be in order. When the case was to be tried, the Assembly was duly warned that it was about to sit in a judicial capacity, to decide on the unconstitutionality and justice of that act of the presbytery. The first step was to read the sentence, or decision appealed from; the second to read the reasons of the appeal. The third to read the record in the case, including the testimony. The testimony in this case was all the evidence presented to the presbytery to prove the opposition of the church to the division. Fourth step was to hear the original parties. The only parties in the case were the presbytery who had done the wrong and the church that suffered it. They were accordingly heard. The fifth step, according to the book, would be to hear the members of the inferior judicatory. This direction was complied with in taking the fourth step, the presbytery being one of the parties. Thus every direction of the book was complied with, in this, as in a hundred similar cases of appeal from executive acts. It would be mere trifling to say that the directions were not all followed, because there were not two original parties distinct from the presbytery. There never are such parties, even in judicial cases, when the ground of prosecution is common fame. Besides, had this appeal been carried in the first instance to the synod, and there decided against the appellants, then the original parties in this case would have been the church and the presbytery, and the members of the synod, the members of the inferior judicatory whom the book directs to be heard in the fifth step of the trial. Thus the whole rule would have been complied with to the letter.* There is, therefore, no foundation in our constitution for this

* It is perhaps to be regretted that the inferior judicatory should ever be regarded, in cases of complaint or appeal, as a party. This, however, is a designation which the judicatory bears as much when the sentence appealed from is a judicial, as when it is an executive act. If a minister is accused by any particular person of an offence before his presbytery and is condemned, should he appeal, the accuser and the accused are properly the parties, when the case comes before the sy-

new doctrine. Every letter of the rules may be, and has been fully complied with in a multitude of cases, where the decision appealed from was merely an executive act.

It may be said, however, that it is very desirable to have appeals confined if possible to strictly judicial cases; that it is unreasonable that the executive acts of a body should be arrested by any dissatisfied member. This objection, however, overlooks the fact that no merely dissatisfied member has a right to appeal. That remedy is expressly confined to a person or persons directly affected by a decision. If a minister is tried before his presbytery for an offence and condemned, if he does not choose to appeal, no dissatisfied member can do it. And if he is acquitted, no member of the court, however he may disapprove of the decision, can appeal; his remedy is to complain. But if a presbytery dismiss a pastor, against his will, from his charge, as he is directly affected by the act, he may appeal from it; or if they divide a church, the church may appeal. The right of appeal is limited, therefore, not to a particular class of decisions, but to a particular class of persons, viz.: to those who are injuriously affected by the decision.

We have, however, acted long enough upon the defensive. We shall proceed to show that this new doctrine, especially if applied to complaints as well as appeals, (and we have seen that the two cannot in this matter be consistently separated,) is subversive of the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism, and inconsistent with the uniform practice of the Church. It is a radical principle of our system "that a larger part of the Church, or a representation of it, should govern a smaller, or determine matters of controversy which arise therein." It is in virtue of this principle that every man who is aggrieved or injured by a decision of a lower court has the right to seek redress in a higher. He has the right to bring the matter up himself, and is not dependent on the majority of the body, whether it shall come up or not. It is further a fundamental principle of our system that any thing which has been unconstitutionally or injuriously done in a lower court, whether it affect an individual or not, may be corrected by a higher court. This is of the essence of Presbyterianism. It is involved in the declaration that the Church is to be governed not only by congregational and presbyterial, but also by synodical assemblies; and more expressly in the declaration that synods have authority "to

nod; and the presbytery is not properly a party. But if the prosecution is on the ground of common fame, then as far as there are original parties at all, they are the accused and the presbytery from whose sentence he appeals. Whatever impropriety there may be in calling the inferior court a party, it has nothing to do with the present question. The court is no more a party in cases of appeal, when its decision was executive, than when it was judicial.

redress whatever has been done by presbyteries contrary to order." It is evident that any interpretation of words and phrases occurring in rules regulating details in the administration of discipline, which comes into conflict with these radical principles of our system, must be rejected as false and unwarranted. The new doctrine is liable to this fatal objection. It effectually prevents the exercise of control on the part of the higher courts, and renders the lower judicatories independent as to all their executive acts, which includes the larger and perhaps most important part of their proceedings. A presbytery may trample on the constitution with impunity; it may admit congregationalists to sit as ruling elders; it may receive ministers without requiring them to adopt our standards; it may dismiss a pastor against his own will and that of his people; it may, for party purposes, divide a congregation contrary to its wishes, or instal a pastor over them in spite of their remonstrances; and for these and a multitude of similar cases there is no redress, if the right to complain and appeal is to be confined to judicial cases. The review of records affords no remedy at all in nine out of ten of such instances. The records contain a bare statement of the facts, that such a man was received, such a pastor dismissed, such an one installed, or such a congregation divided, but whether these acts were constitutionally performed, they give no means of judging. They afford, therefore, nothing on which the higher court can lay hold. Besides, by withholding their records, it would be in the power of the inferior judicatory to prevent all knowledge of their irregularities, even in those few cases in which the Minutes might disclose them.

It may be said that *fama clamosa* affords ground for calling the offending judicatory to an account. But, in the first place, this is a remedy which applies only in extreme cases. And, in the second, this would be doing by indirection what ought to be done decently and in order. A minority grieved by the unconstitutional or injurious acts of the majority, not having the right to make an orderly representation of the case to the higher court, is driven to make a clamour about it, in order to attract their attention. This surely is not Presbyterianism. And besides, the citation and trial of judicatories on the ground of common fame, is the most invidious, the most cumbrous, and the least effectual of all methods for the correction of abuses. If, therefore, the right of appeal and complaint be taken away, except in judicial cases, there is no remedy for the largest and most important class of unconstitutional or unjust acts of ecclesiastical bodies. Our New School brethren have never brought forward a principle more completely subversive of Presbyterian government than the new doctrine, in its full extent, would certainly be. It would effectually prevent the legitimate

operation of our system; it would place the constitution, order, and purity of the Church at the mercy of any one presbytery, and leave minorities completely in the hands of majorities.

It may be said that these remarks apply only to that form of the new doctrine which excludes complaints, no less than appeals, in all except judicial cases. We have already admitted that the evil is far less sweeping, if the right of complaining against unconstitutional or injurious executive acts be allowed to remain. But the right of appeal is no less sacred than that of complaint. The constitution places them on the same ground, as far as the present subject of debate is concerned. The Assembly has no more authority to take away the one, than it has to take away the other. The argument which has been applied to justify the denial of the right to appeal, except in judicial cases, applies in all its force to complaints. It is proper, therefore, to show what would be the effect of the full assertion of the new doctrine. Besides, the evil arising from denying the right of appeal where the constitution allows it, is no less real and grievous, though less extensive than when the denial is extended to complaints. A man dismissed from his charge, a congregation divided, or over whom a pastor has been installed against its consent, have a right not merely to have these acts reviewed, but their operation arrested. And it is often of the last importance that the effect of the decision should be suspended until a final determination can be had. The reversal of a presbyterial decision to divide a congregation, after it had actually been organized for nearly a year, into two parts, would often aggravate instead of healing the difficulty. And so in a multitude of other cases, of which abundant examples might be cited from the Minutes. This new doctrine, therefore, is inconsistent with the radical principles of Presbyterianism, and its full operation effectually subverts our whole form of government; and even in its restricted application to appeals, it is in direct conflict with the constitutional rights of aggrieved parties, and productive of much injustice and hardship.

This doctrine is at variance also with the undeviating practice of our own and all other Presbyterian Churches. This of itself is a fatal objection to any new doctrine. The fact that we have been going on in accordance with the usage of all other Presbyterian bodies, for a hundred and twenty years, interpreting and administering our constitution in a certain way, is answer enough to any man who comes forward with a new doctrine, extracted by legal subtlety from the technicalities of the constitution. The words of our book have the sense which they were intended to bear; and they were intended to bear the sense in which its authors and administrators have ever understood and applied them. If we depart from this rule of construction we might as well have no

constitution at all. Stability is one of the primary requisites of good government. And hence it is a great evil that any long-established principle should be unsettled by some novel interpretation of our fundamental laws. That the practice of our Church has been uniform on this subject, is admitted. It is maintained, however, that this usage, as far as concerns the period anterior to the revision of the constitution in 1821, is of no authority, and that the time which has since elapsed is too short to give to usage any force in opposition to what is supposed to be the sense of the constitution. This principle is, no doubt, correct. Usage is not of authority in opposition to a written constitution. But it is of the greatest authority in a question of interpretation. It cannot be rightfully disregarded, unless the constitution be clearly in opposition to the usage. We have already seen that there is no such opposition in the present case; that the uniform practice of the Church is in harmony with our constitutional rules. This being the case, the argument from usage is of course conclusive.

The assumption that the amendments adopted in 1821 were designed to abrogate the old common law of the Church is a very extraordinary one. This common law had grown up in this country and in Scotland, under the brief and aphoristic statements of Presbyterian principles contained in the Westminster Directory. These statements were incorporated in the constitution of 1788, and are retained in the amended constitution of 1821. If from that time they were to be differently understood, it is strange that they were not so modified as to give some intimation of the fact. But how is it known that these amendments were *intended* to abrogate the old common law of the Church? The authors of the amendments declare, some in one way and some in another, that they had no such intention The Church certainly intended no such change, because it went on acting under the amended constitution precisely as it had acted before. It was not until fifteen years after the amendments were made, that any one discovered what they were intended to accomplish. It is evident that such a discovery cannot be entitled to much consideration.

To show how uniform has been the usage of our Church on this subject, even since 1821, we shall proceed to cite some of the examples to be found on our Minutes; and for reasons already stated, we shall not confine these examples to cases of appeals. In 1822, the Assembly entertained and decided an appeal from the Synod of Ohio, relating to the validity of the election of certain elders. *Minutes*, p. 18 and 21. In 1827, Dr. Green and others presented a complaint against a decision of the Synod of Philadelphia, which turned on the question, Whether the same person could properly hold the office of ruling elder in two churches at the same time? The decision of the synod was affirmed, p.

117. Two other complaints of a similar character were decided the same year, p. 125, 130, and 132. In 1828, an appeal was received from some of the pew-holders of the first Church in Troy, against a decision of the Synod of Albany, p. 228; and a complaint from the Presbytery of Philadelphia against the Presbytery of Columbia, relating to the licensure of Mr. Shaffer, p. 234. In 1829, two complaints were received against decisions which were not judicial. In 1830, an appeal was presented from the Church in Bergen from a decision of the Synod of Genesee, which, however, was dismissed for want of a date and other irregularities in the mode of its prosecution, p. 9 and 17. In 1831, the complaint of the minority of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, in the case of Mr. Barnes, was presented; and in 1832, a complaint against a decision of the Synod of Virginia relating to called meetings of synod, p. 315. In 1832, there appear to have been five, if not six, complaints of the same character presented to the Assembly, p. 476. In 1834, the Assembly received and decided the appeal of the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia against the decision of the synod, before referred to. The same year the Synod of Philadelphia referred for adjudication the appeal and complaint of the Fifth Church of Philadelphia relative to the call of Dr. Beman, p. 8. In 1835, the Assembly received and decided the appeal of Thomas Bradford and others from a decision of the Second Presbytery dividing their church, p. 20; and also an appeal and complaint of Thomas Bradford and others relating to the installation of Mr. Duffield, when the acts of the presbytery in relation thereto were reversed, p. 33. Immediately under the record of this latter decision we find the following minute, viz.: "The Assembly took up the report of the committee on the records of the Synod of Philadelphia, and the records were approved with the following exception, viz.: In regard to the doctrine of the said Synod concerning appeals, complaints and protests, and the application of this doctrine, about which the Assembly express no opinion." There was the less necessity for expressing an opinion in words, as they had just expressed one so intelligibly, by acting in direct opposition to that doctrine. In 1836, we find several examples of the same kind, as, for instance, the appeal and complaint of the Second Presbytery against the Synod of Philadelphia for dissolving them as a presbytery, p. 273. In 1837, there was an appeal presented by Rev. A. G. Morss and others, of the congregation of Frankford, which does not appear to have related to a judicial decision, p. 417 and 480. In 1838, there was an unusual number of such complaints and appeals; for example, a complaint by the Presbytery of Wilmington; a protest and complaint by R. J. Breckinridge and others against the Synod of Philadelphia for their decision relating to the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia; an appeal and complaint of J. Camp-

bell and others against a decision of the Synod of New Jersey; an appeal and complaint of certain persons claiming to be the Church of St. Charles, against a decision of the Synod of Missouri, that they were not the said church; which appeal was sustained, and the proceedings of the synod in the case were set aside. See pages 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 23, and 39 of the Minutes.

There is not then, upon our Minutes, a single case of an appeal or complaint, which was rejected on the ground that it did not refer to a judicial sentence. We have been going on for a hundred and twenty years entertaining such appeals without any one dreaming of their being irregular. This has been done as freely since, as before, the revision of the constitution, by those who proposed and by those who adopted the amendments. If after all this a new and opposite doctrine is to be introduced, there never can be any stability or security with regard to any principle of Presbyterian Church government. If precedents so long continued, so numerous, so highly sanctioned, are to be set aside, the Church will demand something more than verbal criticism, or ingenious inferences from collated passages. Nothing short of a plain and intelligible denial of the right to complain of oppressive and unconstitutional acts; or to appeal from unrighteous decisions, though they may not be judicial, will induce Presbyterians to forego a privilege which they have enjoyed from the very foundation of their Church. No one pretends that there is any such denial to be found in our amended constitution. The prohibition is a mere inference from the technicalities of the rules of process. We think, however, that we have shown that there is no such opposition between our rules of process and the radical principles of our system; that every one of those rules may be observed to the very letter, in cases of appeal or complaint against executive acts, and consequently that there is no foundation in the constitution for this new doctrine. If it is to be applied to appeals, we see not how any one can fail to apply it to complaints and references, and if so applied, all must acknowledge that our system of government would be completely overturned. The right of appeal is already restricted within very narrow limits. It is not the privilege of any member of the court. It belongs exclusively to an aggrieved party; to those whose character or interests are immediately concerned in the decision. And to all such it is a right guaranteed by the constitution and by the undeviating practice of the Church.

b. Review of a Decision that Appeals cannot lie except in Judicial cases. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. vii., par. ii., and sec. iii., par. ii.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 574.]

This was an appeal from the decision of the synod refusing to entertain Dr. Skinner's appeal from the decision of the presbytery, dissolving his pastoral relations to the Church in Lexington. After hearing the parties, viz., Dr. Skinner and the commissioners of the synod, the vote was taken by calling the roll, for sustaining the appeal 42; for not sustaining 59. So the appeal was not sustained.

The accounts of the debate on this case published in the papers, are so brief, as to leave us at a loss as to the grounds of this decision. In one paper (*New York Observer*, June 10th), it is said, the synod "refused to entertain the appeal, as the presbytery had acted on his own request, and that of the people" in dissolving the pastoral relation between Dr. Skinner and the Lexington Church. If this were the ground of the synod's action, then the decision of the Assembly does nothing more than sanction the correctness of their judgment. It involves no constitutional principle. But in other places it is stated that the synod refused to entertain the appeal in question, because the decision of the presbytery was an executive act, and not a judicial sentence. If this was the ground assumed by the synod, then the action of the Assembly would seem to sanction the principle that no appeal can lie except in strictly judicial cases. We presume this is the correct statement of the case, both from the drift of the reports in the newspapers, and from the fact that the former reason, though a very good one for refusing to sustain Dr. Skinner's appeal from the action of his Presbytery, was no reason for refusing to entertain it.

Though this is so, we are slow to believe that the Assembly deliberately intended to sanction the doctrine that appeals are a remedy confined to strictly judicial cases. A member of the house informs us that several members who voted with the majority, told him that the only point they intended to decide by their vote was, that Dr. Skinner ought not to be restored to his relation as pastor of the Lexington Church, that they did not mean to sanction the general principle as to appeals. We see also in the list of those who voted to sustain the action of the synod, the names of brethren who we know do not hold, unless their opinions have been suddenly changed, the doctrine that appeals can lie only in judicial cases. We trust that this decision, made under such circumstances, may not be pleaded as authority for that doctrine. As this is a subject which has been repeatedly dis-

[* From article on "*The General Assembly*;" topic; "*Dr. Skinner's Appeal from the Decision of the Synod of Virginia*;" *Princeton Review*, 1848, p. 416.]

cussed in this journal, we shall not trouble our readers with any extended argument on it now. We beg leave merely to submit the following remarks:

It must be allowed to be a great evil when the action of the Assembly is inconstant and contradictory on important constitutional principles. Such inconsistency not only tends of necessity to impair confidence, but it is in itself a very serious evil. All courts are governed, and should, to a great extent, be governed by precedent. Long-established usage has the authority of law. People have the right to depend upon it. It works manifest injustice, when a party avails himself of a remedy, which a court for years and generations has recognized as appropriate, and he is suddenly and unexpectedly, by a new construction of the constitution, refused a hearing because he has put his case in a wrong form. It is an undoubted fact, that the highest judicatory of our Church, in accordance with the uniform usage of other Presbyterian Churches, has for a hundred years uniformly recognized the right of appeal in an aggrieved party, in any case, whether judicial or executive. There is, as far as we know or believe, but one solitary decision of the Assembly to the contrary, and that preceded and followed by a multitude of cases of an opposite character. It is still more humiliating and injurious when we see men who one year or in one judicatory, take ground that an appellant shall not be heard unless the case be strictly judicial, and in the following year and on other occasions quietly entertain such appeals without a whisper of disapprobation. The only way to avoid these evils, to maintain the dignity and authority of the Assembly, and to deal justly with those who appear at its bar, is to adhere rigidly to the established interpretation of the constitution.

But if this new construction is against all precedent, it is, as it seems to us, no less clearly against the express language and obvious intent of the constitution. "Every kind of decision," it is said, "which is formed in any Church judicatory, except the highest, is subject to the review of a superior judicatory, and may be carried before it in one or the other of the four following ways." This cannot mean, that one kind of decisions can be carried up in one way, and another kind in another; for it is admitted that every kind may be brought up by review of records, by reference, and by complaint; and, therefore, the passage must mean that the several remedies enumerated, are applicable to any and every kind of error or injustice. But in this enumeration appeals are included, and therefore as any kind of case can be carried up by review, reference, or complaint, so it can be by appeal. This is the plain meaning of the passage as it has ever been understood and acted upon.

In the third section of that chapter it is said, "An appeal is the removal of a cause already decided, from an inferior to a superior judicatory, by a party aggrieved." In the language of our Book *a cause* is a case, an act or decision of a court, about which diversity of opinion may exist, or in which different interests may be involved. Thus it is said in the next section, "Another method by which a cause which has been decided by an inferior judicatory may be carried before a superior, is by complaint." Here *a cause* is any decision. This is admitted, for no one contends that complaints are limited to judicial matters. As then any decision or cause may be carried up by complaint, so also by appeal.

Again it is said, "The necessary operation of an appeal is, to suspend all further proceedings on the ground of the sentence appealed from. But if a sentence of suspension, or excommunication from Church privileges, or of deposition from office be the sentence appealed from, it shall be considered as in force until the appeal shall be issued." The plain meaning of this is, that an appeal suspends the operation of the decision appealed from, *except in judicial cases.* Suspension, excommunication and deposition are all the judicial sentences known to our constitution, unless mere admonition be added, which last, from its nature, does not admit of being suspended, for the vote to admonish is the admonition itself. Here then the constitution expressly and most justly provides that an appeal suspends the operation of a decision, except in judicial cases, and therefore by necessary implication, admits that there are other than judicial sentences, from which an appeal may properly be taken.

Our book makes two and only two distinctions as to complaints and appeals. The one relates to the persons entitled to avail themselves of these remedies, the other to their operation. Any one can complain of the decision of a church court who thinks that decision is unconstitutional or injurious. It is the right of any member of the judicatory or of the Church, to see that an evil, as he deems it, may be examined into and redressed. But no one can appeal but "an aggrieved party." If he does not see fit to arrest the operation of the decision, no other person has the right to interfere and prevent the will of the judicatory taking effect. An appeal, therefore, differs from a complaint, in being a remedy confined to those who consider themselves aggrieved or injured by the decision of the lower court. It differs also from a complaint inasmuch as the latter does not suspend the operation of the decision complained of. When however our book says, That "every kind of decision" can be carried up from a lower to a higher court, by appeal, it does not mean every decision, but what it says, "*every kind* of decision," because the interests of parties may be most deeply impli-

cated by every kind of act of a Church court, executive, legislative, or judicial. Appeals, from their nature, are confined to cases of real or supposed grievance.

This suggests the main reason after all for insisting on this right of appeal. It is essential to our system. Neither ministers or church members will ever submit to give it up, and put themselves entirely in the power of a session or presbytery. The denial of the right is an arbitrary stretch of power. There are innumerable cases in which a complaint would afford no redress. The evil is consummated before the remedy can be applied. Suppose, for example, a presbytery should decide that a congregation should be divided, and the people, or a portion of them, feel aggrieved by the decision, what good would it do them to complain? The sentence would take effect; two churches would be constituted and organized, and might both have pastors, before the synod could hear the complaint. It would be a mockery to tell such people, after the evil was all done, they might complain about it. They have no redress, unless by appeal they can arrest the decision, until the higher courts have decided on its wisdom or justice. The same remarks apply to other cases. A presbytery may dissolve the pastoral relation between a pastor and his people; the people may consider themselves deeply aggrieved. If they cannot appeal there is no remedy. Their pastor is gone, installed over another church, before their complaint comes to be heard. Or the pastor may be the aggrieved party, but if he can only complain, his place may be supplied by another pastor, before a final decision is had on the question whether he is to be removed or not. How unreasonable and unjust is this. A sentence is allowed to take full effect, before the competent authorities have decided whether it shall have any effect at all.

We are persuaded the churches will never give up the right of appeal; the right of arresting the operation of decisions which they regard as disastrous or unjust, until the court of the last resort has given its judgment. It is a primary principle of justice that no sentence should take effect, until all who have a right to sit in judgment in the case, have decided that it shall be carried out. This is "the necessary effect of an appeal," says our book. It is the righteous provision of our standards that an injury shall not be inflicted, before it be finally determined that it is unavoidable or deserved. The exceptions made as to the application of this principle in judicial cases, is plainly a sacrifice of the individual to the whole—it is better that one person should suffer for a while under an unrighteous sentence, than that the whole Church should be disgraced and injured by an unworthy member or minister, until an appeal can be carried through all our courts. The fact is that so far from appeals being confined to judicial cases, those

are precisely the cases where they are of the least importance. They have in such cases no advantage over a complaint—they do not arrest the operation of the sentence, and they do not bring it more effectually under the review of the higher court.

There is another remark we cannot refrain from making. The action of the Assembly in this case involves a contradiction. They decide that an appeal cannot lie in a particular case, while in the very act of entertaining such an appeal. If the synod were right in refusing to entertain Dr. Skinner's appeal from the presbytery, how could the Assembly entertain his appeal from the synod? If the case was not a judicial one before the synod, it was not a judicial one before the Assembly. It could not change its character by passing from one court to the other. The only consistent course for the Assembly would have been, the moment the appeal was reported, to refuse to hear it, because the decision against which it was entered was not a judicial sentence. This was what the synod did. But instead of this, the Assembly gravely entertain an appeal from a non-judicial decision of the synod, resolve themselves into a court, hear the parties, deliver as their judgment that they have no right to do what, with so much solemnity, they are actually engaged in. They say appeals are confined to judicial cases, while engaged in trying one from an executive decision. So deeply wrought into the consciousness of the Church is the conviction that the right of appeal is a right sacred to every aggrieved party, no matter under what form the grievance may be inflicted. If Dr. Skinner had no right to appeal from the decision of the presbytery, he had no right to appeal from a similar decision of the synod, and the Assembly in hearing his appeal from the latter, contradict their own decision, that the synod did right in refusing to hear him as an appellant from the presbytery.

Some of the special advocates of liberty of speech and opinion, are apt, when in the majority, to find out that it is very heinous to express any dissent from the decision of the General Assembly. This is not Protestantism; nor is it Christianity. It is perfectly consistent with all due deference and obedience, for any member of the Church to express without reserve his opinions as to the wisdom or justice of any decision of our ecclesiastical courts. Least of all can the exercise of this right be disputed when the decision in question is opposed to the established usage of the Church, and the previous decisions of almost every Assembly since the first organization of that body. We do not, however, believe that the Assembly, whatever may be the legal import of their decision, consciously intended to sanction the new doctrine on appeals; we believe they simply meant to say that Dr. Skinner ought not to be restored to the pastoral office over the church in Lexington, —a decision, we presume, in which all parties concur.

c. Legitimate Grounds of Complaint. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. vii., sec. iv., par. ii.—*Digest* of 1873, p. 596.—Comp. *Form of Gov.* v. iv., p. 204.]

The Rev. R. J. Breckinridge, D. D., presented to the Synod of Philadelphia, at its late meeting, two papers expressing dissent from the decisions of the General Assembly of 1843, touching the constitution of the quorum of presbyteries, and the right of ruling elders to join in the imposition of hands in the ordination of ministers, and proposing that the synod should overture the Assembly to reverse these decisions. The question being on the adoption of the said papers, the synod decided not to adopt; and thereupon Dr. Breckinridge and others appealed and complained to the next Assembly. The papers connected with the subject having been referred to the judicial committee, the Rev. S. B. Wilson, chairman of that committee, reported that they had examined the same, and that, in their opinion, the decisions complained of were not, according to our Book of Discipline, matters of appeal or complaint, and recommending that the papers be returned to the parties who presented them.

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The adoption of that report was advocated by Dr. Wilson, Dr. Hoge, Dr. Elliot, Messrs. A. O. Patterson and N. L. Rice; it was opposed by Dr. J. C. Young, Mr. Junkin, Mr. Stonestreet, Mr. Gildersleeve, and others. After a protracted discussion the vote was taken and resulted as follows, *Ayes: Ministers* 88, *Elders* 53—total 141. *Nays: Ministers* 21, *Elders* 26—total 47. Thus the report was adopted,† and the Assembly decided that, in the case before them, there was no ground on which either an appeal or complaint could rest.

Until within a comparatively recent period there was no diversity as far as we know either of opinion or practice, in our Church, on the legitimate grounds of appeals and complaints. At present it would seem that there are no less than four different views more or less prevalent on the subject. The first is that any decision of a lower, may be brought up before a higher judicatory by either an appeal or complaint, at the option of those concerned. The second opinion goes to the opposite extreme, and denies the right of either appeal or complaint except in cases strictly judicial, *i. e.* cases in which there has been a trial and a sentence. The third opinion is, that appeals are

[* From article on "*The General Assembly;*" topic, "*Appeal and Complaint of R. J. Breckinridge and others.*"—*Princeton Review*, 1844, p. 424.]

† The *Presbyterian* reports the *ayes* as 143, and *nays* 47. The *Protestant and Herald* makes the *ayes* 142, *nays* 45.

limited to judicial cases, but that complaints may be entered against any decision of a lower judicatory. The fourth, which we believe to be sustained by the plain doctrine of our book, and the uniform practice of our own and of all other Presbyterian Churches, is that taken by the Rev. N. L. Rice, and we presume by a great majority of the late Assembly, viz. that appeals and complaints may lie not against any decision, but against *any kind* of decision of a lower court. That is, it matters not whether the act be judicial, legislative, or executive, it may be brought under the revision of a higher court by either of the methods mentioned. But as both appeals and complaints are measures of redress, they from their nature suppose a grievance, a wrong done or charged, and therefore cannot possibly lie in any case where no grievance or wrong-doing is supposable.

It is somewhat remarkable that after nearly a century and a half of practice, during which appeals and complaints have almost yearly and often many in the same year been brought up and decided, it should still be a matter of debate when a man has a right to avail himself of this mode of redress. To the best of our knowledge there never were two opinions on this subject until the year 1834, when the late Rev. Mr. Winchester, in defending the Synod of Philadelphia against the complaint of the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia, took the ground that no appeal or complaint could lie except in a judicial case, a case of trial and censure. At that time the synod which he defended repudiated that ground of defence, for they themselves referred to that very Assembly an appeal from an executive act. The following autumn, however, the synod, under the lead it is believed of some of the present appellants, took the ground, that no appeal, complaint or even protest could lie except in cases of a strictly judicial character. This, however, was a momentary delusion, for the members of that synod without the least hesitation or objection joined in entertaining and issuing, the following spring, an appeal of Thomas Bradford and others from a decision of a presbytery to divide the Fifth Church of Philadelphia, contrary to the wishes of the people. It was found by the very authors and advocates of the new doctrine that it would not work, without destroying the rights of the people and subverting the constitution. In the case of Mr. Bradford's appeal, the church with which he was connected considered themselves not only aggrieved, but their title to their property jeoparded by the act of the presbytery, and they had therefore the clearest right not only to have that act reviewed, but its operation arrested, until its constitutionality and justice were passed upon by the highest judicatory of the Church. Neither a complaint nor a review of records could afford them redress, for it was necessary that the operation of the act of presbytery should be suspend-

ed, or the evil would be past remedy. This doctrine therefore was abandoned, and in 1836 there were several cases of appeals or complaints from other than judicial decisions; another in 1837, and in 1838 no less than four or five cases of the same kind; one a complaint by the Presbytery of Wilmington, another a protest and complaint of R. J. Breckinridge and others; another an appeal and complaint of J. Campbell and others; another an appeal and complaint by certain persons claiming to be the Church of St. Charles, against a decision of the Synod of Missouri, that they were not said church. The whole Church therefore went on after this new doctrine was started just as it did before, hearing and issuing appeals and complaints, as in duty bound, from all kinds of decisions. In 1839, however, a complaint was presented to the Assembly by A. D. Metcalf and others against the Synod of Virginia for deciding that appeals may lie in cases not judicial. This complaint the Assembly sustained. This was the origin of the modified form of the new doctrine, viz., that appeals are confined to cases of trial and sentence but that complaints have a wider range, which is the third of the four opinions on this subject mentioned above.

This decision of the Assembly is against all precedent. It is no disrespect to that body to think and say that it is more probable that they erred in their judgment, than that all other Assemblies that ever sat in this country were mistaken. We beg leave to refer our readers to the account of that case in our volume for 1839, where they will find the precise doctrine on the subject, which we are now advocating, stated and defended. We may be excused from making the following brief extract from our history of the Assembly for that year. "Our constitution says, 'That every kind of decision which is formed in any Church judicatory, except the highest, is subject to the review of a superior judicatory, and may be carried up in one or the other of the four following ways: 1. General review and control; 2. Reference; 3. Appeal; and 4. Complaint.' The question is, what is the meaning of this plain declaration? It does not mean, because it does not say, that every individual decision, but *every kind* of decision may be carried in either of these four ways. These different forms of redress contemplate different circumstances, and are not all available in every particular case. A reference, for example, must be made by the body itself, and not by an individual member, but the body may refer any kind of case. An appeal supposes an aggrieved party, but he may appeal from any kind of decision which directly affects himself. A complaint supposes some kind of impropriety in the act complained of, but it may be entered against any kind of act alleged to be improper. So that any kind of decision may regularly be brought up in each of the

several ways specified above."* We make this extract and reference to the article whence it is taken, because we understand that our pages were frequently referred to on the floor of the Assembly, and quoted in support of the right of the appellants in the case then before the house. It will be seen however that the doctrine taught in our pages is not that every particular decision may be made the subject of appeal or complaint, but that these modes of address are applicable to every kind of decision. It is not only when a man is tried and suspended from the Church or the ministry that he has the right to appeal, but if dismissed from his pastoral charge, against his will, or in any way personally aggrieved by the act of a Church court, he has the same right.

The difference between an appeal and complaint is, that a complaint does not arrest the operation of the decision against which it is entered, and secondly, that an appeal can be made only by an aggrieved person; whereas a complaint may be made by any member of the court who considers the decision unjust or unconstitutional.† If a presbytery divide a congregation against its will, it is only the people who have a right to appeal, but any member of the presbytery may complain of the act. Our doctrine, therefore, on this subject is the common doctrine of our Church, viz: that any kind of decision of a judicatory can thus be brought under the review of a higher court. No man can appeal from a decision that does not affect himself, and no man can complain of a decision which is not wrong either actually or supposably; which is not charged with having violated some rule of the constitution or of justice. As a complaint is a mode of redress, where there is no grievance there can be no complaint.

We fully agree, therefore, with Dr. Young and Mr. Stonestreet, in the main drift of their able arguments before the late Assembly, as far as we can judge from the reports given in the papers. Those gentlemen argued to show that the fact that the decision of the Synod of Philadelphia from which Dr. Breckinridge appealed and against which he complained, was not a judicial sentence, was no legitimate bar in the way of the Assembly's entertaining the case.‡ We differ from

* *Biblical Repertory* and *Princeton Review*, for 1839, p. 433, [or see above, p. 474, of this chap.]

† *Repertory*, 1839, p. 435.

‡ In looking over the report of the proceedings of the two General Assemblies that met in Edinburgh in May last, we noticed some eight or twelve cases of appeal from decisions of presbyteries to translate a minister from one church to another, or to install him notwithstanding the objections of a part of the people. In all such cases the right to appeal is essential to the protection of the interests of those concerned. If a congregation object to have a man ordained over them, and the presbytery decide to do it, unless their decision is arrested by an appeal, the man becomes their pastor no matter how iniquitous the act may be.

them, however, in thinking that that principle covered or even touched the case before the house. Had some ruling elder claimed the right in the Presbytery of Baltimore to join in the imposition of hands in the ordination of a minister, and been refused by a vote of that body, he could have complained to the synod, and if the synod sustained the presbytery, he might complain to the General Assembly. Or if the synod had passed a resolution prohibiting elders from taking part in such service, any member of the body would have had a right to complain. But the case before the Assembly was of a very different nature, and was properly dismissed.

The principle just adverted to, viz.: that a complaint supposes a

The argument originally urged by Mr. Winchester was, and it has often been presented since, that an appeal is a judicial process, as is evident from the use of the words trial, cause, sentence, testimony, &c., and being a judicial process is only applicable to a judicial case. The fallacy of this argument is, that it overlooks the fact that any executive act may become the subject of judicial investigation. A presbytery resolves to divide a congregation, the people appeal. Then the propriety of the act is judicially investigated. You have the sentence appealed from; you have the testimony to show that the decision was made and what were the facts in the case; you have the parties, one affirming and the other denying the propriety of the decision. Take for illustration one of the many cases which came before the last Scotch Assembly. The Free "Assembly took up the appeal by the congregation of Maryburgh against the decision of the Presbytery of Dingwall, agreeing to translate the Rev. George Macleod from Maryburgh to Lochbroom. Parties being called, Mr. Kennedy appeared for the Presbytery of Dingwall, and Mr. Lomond for the congregation of Lochbroom. There was no appearance for the congregation of Maryburgh. The reasons of the appeal were read by the clerk." The reasons are given at length; then follows the pleading of the parties, and when they had been heard, it is said, "The parties were now removed," and the house proceeded to give judgment, when it was resolved "to dismiss the appeal, affirm the judgment, and order Mr. Macleod to be translated to Lochbroom with all convenient speed." (Edinburg Witness for May 28, 1844.) One such case, and hundreds of the same kind, might be cited from our own records and from those of the Scottish Church, is a complete refutation of the whole argument in favour of confining appeals to judicial cases. It shows that all the prescriptions of our book are applicable to appeals from executive acts. We are the more anxious to call attention to this point because we fear lest it should be inferred from the action of the Assembly that the appeal and complaint of Dr. Breckinridge were dismissed on the ground that the decision appealed from was not in the strict sense of the term a judicial sentence. The Assembly in their answer to the protest of Dr. Young and others, place their decision on entirely different grounds, and are not to be considered as in any way sanctioning the restricted doctrine of complaints and appeals, which we believe to be contrary to the constitution, the practice, the rights and interests of the Church. We do not enter anew on the discussion because this point was not involved in the case before the Assembly, and because it has been repeatedly discussed in our pages. See Repertory for 1835 and 1839.

grievance can hardly be called into question. Does any man complain of anything which he does not think wrong or injurious? Does not the nature of the act imply a charge against the body complained of, that it had no right to do the thing in question, or that it infringed on the rights of others? Does not our book say that a "complaint is a representation," that "a decision by an inferior judicatory has been irregularly or unjustly made?" Of course where there is no room for the charge of irregularity or injustice there can be no room for a complaint. If the decision is not charged with being in violation of any rule, or with inflicting any injury on those concerned, it is preposterous to assert that there is a right of complaint. A body cannot be summoned to a higher court for the exercise of its acknowledged rights, in accordance with the constitution, and in cases subject to its own discretion. If a presbytery elects A. B. instead of C. D. moderator, no one can complain since the presbytery has a right to choose their own moderator, and, within the limits of the constitution may choose whom they please. They may choose the oldest man or the youngest man, the wisest or the weakest, and no man may call them to account because in his judgment they might have made a better choice. If such an act is made a ground of complaint, it must be charged that it was irregularly or unjustly or corruptly performed. The complaint must rest not on the act itself, but upon the assumption that it violates some rule which the judicatory was bound to observe, or that it affects unjustly the rights or interests of others. There are then certain acts which are purely discretionary, which a judicatory have a perfect right to do or not to do at pleasure, which cannot possibly be made the ground of a complaint, unless they can be charged as unjust or irregular.

The only question then, is, whether the act of the Synod of Philadelphia was such an act. To determine this point, we have only to ask what the act was, and secondly, whether it can be charged or supposed to violate any rule or to infringe any right. As to the act itself, it was a simple refusal to adopt an overture. Dr. Breckinridge presented two memorials condemning in strong language the decision of the Assembly of 1843, as to the constitution of a quorum of presbytery, and the right of elders to join in the imposition of hands in the ordination of ministers, and calling upon the synod to overture the Assembly to rescind the obnoxious resolutions, and to adopt others of a contrary import. This the synod refused to do. Now the only question is, whether a synod is bound to adopt any and every overture presented to it; or whether any right is infringed by their refusing to do so? This question has nothing to do with the correctness or incorrectness of the views contained in the overture. It may assert self-evident or

acknowledged truths, still it is a matter entirely within the discretion of the body to receive or reject it. Because a synod may present overtures to the Assembly, it does not follow that it is bound to do so. It may, if it chooses, call upon the Assembly to assert that Calvinism is true and Romanism false, but it cannot be forced to make such a call, or charged with acting unjustly or irregularly for refusing to make it. This is plain from the nature of the case, for such an overture is a petition, and it is absurd to say that a body can be forced to petition. It is clear, therefore, that the act of the synod was purely discretionary. It is equally clear that the synod's act violated no right, it inflicted no grievance, because no member of a body has a right to make that body adopt his sentiments, or if they hold them, publicly avow them, or to call upon a higher judicatory to avow them. If a man wishes the Assembly to avow certain doctrines, let him make the request, but what right has he to force others to join in that request, or to charge them with acting unjustly or irregularly for refusing to do so? All this is so perfectly plain that Dr. Young, and other advocates of the appeal and complaint, were forced to assume that the synod had decided adversely to the doctrine of the overture. They felt the absurdity of complaining of the mere refusal to adopt a certain paper, and therefore were forced to assume that the refusal to adopt was an expression of an opinion contrary to the contents of the paper. But this is obviously a gratuitous and unwarranted assumption. Had the whole synod agreed with Dr. Breckinridge, and with every word contained in his overtures, they might, with perfect consistency, have rejected them. If a man present a long paper to a synod, asserting the doctrine of the Trinity, and calling upon the Assembly to join in affirmation of the doctrine, do they deny the doctrine because they refuse to adopt the overture? There may surely be other reasons than the incorrectness of its doctrines, to lead a synod to reject such a paper. It may be unnecessary, or uncalled for, or so obviously true as to make the assertion of its sentiments by the body unwise or undesirable. It is therefore obviously a false assumption, contrary to the very face of the record, to say that the Synod of Philadelphia decided that the presence of ruling elders is not necessary to a quorum of presbytery, or that elders may not join in the imposition of hands in the ordination of ministers. They made no such decision; they neither affirmed or denied any thing, they simply refused to adopt Dr. Breckinridge's overture, which cannot be charged with violating any rule, or infringing any of his rights. Of course their action afforded no ground for appeal or complaint.

That this is a correct exposition of the doctrine of our Book is obvious if we ask what is the design of appeals and complaints. They

are intended to redress some grievance or secure the censure of those who inflicted it. Suppose then the complaint before the house had been taken up and sustained, what would be the operation of such a vote? One or the other of two things; either to reverse the decisions of the court below, or to censure them. If the former, then the synod would be required to rescind their vote refusing to adopt Dr. Breckinridge's overture, and ordered to adopt it. Would not this be absurd? One Assembly order a synod to petition another Assembly to condemn the act of a previous Assembly! Or if sustaining the complaint was to amount to a censure on the synod, what were they to be censured for? Why for not joining in a petition. Is this not again absurd? It is plain, therefore, the complaint could not be taken up, because to sustain it, could work no effect which would not be ridiculous or nugatory.

Another legitimate ground on which this extraordinary appeal and complaint were opposed was, that the mere entertaining of it would work a great injustice, if it was to have any effect at all. Properly speaking the complaint would not have brought up any other question than this. Did the synod do right in refusing to adopt Dr. Breckinridge's overture? But the propriety of their action did not depend on the correctness or incorrectness of the sentiments the overture contained. The synod neither affirmed nor denied any thing as to that point. They simply refused to adopt. The truth of the doctrines taught in the overture, therefore, would not fairly have been brought into discussion by considering the appeal. That was not the way to bring up that point, for the synod was not complained of for having denied those doctrines, but for having refused to petition the Assembly to avow them; and as remarked in the preceding paragraph, to sustain such a complaint would not be to affirm the doctrines of the overture, but to censure the synod or to reverse its vote. But if the merits of the question were to be brought up in that way then an obvious injustice would be wrought. For what was the question? It did not relate to the administration but to the meaning of the constitution. But with what colour of justice could one of the largest of the synods of the Church be debarred from taking part in deciding *in thesi* what is the meaning of the constitution? The object professedly sought was to get the judgment of the highest judicatory of the Church as to the principles of our constitution. Why then not ask the whole judicatory? What fair end could be answered by bringing up the question in a form to exclude from all participation in the decision so large a part of the body? They had no more prejudged the matter than other synods and other members of the the house, and the injustice of excluding them would have been flagrant.

Again, if the principle on which this appeal and complaint were advocated should be sanctioned, then any man in the Church could at any time force the General Assembly to consider any abstract question he might choose to propose. The control of the house over its own time and over the subjects that should come before it, would be destroyed. If one of our modern abolitionists, for example, were to overture a synod to request the General Assembly to declare that no slaveholder should be admitted to Church communion, the synod would be bound to present the petition, or be subject to be arraigned at the bar of the Assembly for refusing to do so. And then the Assembly would be bound to consider, not the propriety of the synod's action, but the merits of the question. Thus any and every abstraction in theology, morals, politics, or polity might be forced upon the house, and its time consumed and the peace of the Church destroyed by any man who chose thus to trouble his brethren. No Church court could act on this principle; and if our constitution allowed of such complaints, it would work our ruin or a change in a very short time. Such were the principal arguments urged against the propriety of entertaining Dr. Breckinridge's appeal and complaint, as they are embodied in the answer drawn up by Rev. N. L. Rice, to the protest of the minority, and, as we have seen, the house, by a majority of nearly one hundred, pronounced them valid.

d. In Favor of a Commission to try Appeals and Complaints. [*]

There is no part of our system which works so heavily as that of appeals and complaints. There are great inconveniences connected with it. 1. The whole Church is liable to be harassed and occupied by causes of no general importance. Three hundred men sitting in Philadelphia as the representatives of the whole of our Church, may have their time largely occupied in deciding whether a man in Georgia showed, on a given occasion, six months ago, a bad spirit. 2. The General Assembly is, from its size, an incompetent tribunal. Most persons would rather be tried by twelve men chosen out of the Assembly by lot, than by the whole three hundred. 3. The consumption of time is intolerable. A judicial case recently occupied one of our presbyteries sixty days. It would require three weeks' session of the General Assembly, intelligently and righteously to review that case. This is out of the question; and hence, 4. There is a frequent denial of justice. Such is the disposition of the house to get rid of a protracted judicial case, that every expedient is resorted to, to stave it off.

We know that the minds of many are directed to the means of cor-

[*From article on "*The General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1853, p. 527.]

recting these evils, consistently with our principles. Some propose to make the decisions of synods final in all cases of appeal or complaint from the presbyteries. But this violates our great principle that the whole must govern the parts, and that each part has a right to the protection of the whole. Besides, the remedy does not meet the case. It is impossible that our synods can devote the time required to hearing such cases. We think we shall have to adopt the Scottish (and the Kentucky) method of commissions. A commission is a body consisting of not less than a quorum of the court appointing it, and in which every member of the court who chooses to attend, has the right to a seat, clothed with full power of the court itself. The Synod of Kentucky set the example of acting judicially by commission in the case of the Cumberland Presbytery. We think the practice must utimately be sanctioned and incorporated into our system.

§ 4. Decisions may Confirm or Reverse in Part, and be Expressed in Minute of a Special Committee. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. vii., sec. iii., par. x.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 572.]

A second judicial case was what is called the "appeal and complaint" of Samuel Lowrie against the decision of the Synod of Illinois, refusing to sustain his complaint against the Presbytery of Peoria, for recognizing a second Church in the town of Peoria. This case was taken up and regularly issued by the Assembly. It is twice or oftener called an appeal, as well as a complaint.

The Assembly having heard the documents and the parties, referred the whole matter to a committee to prepare a minute expressive of the judgment of the house. We call attention also to this familiar and proper method of proceeding, because its propriety has sometimes been questioned. Our readers may remember that in the case of Mr. Barnes, the appointment of a committee to draft a resolution which should express the judgment of the house was strenuously resisted, on the ground that the only question which could properly be submitted, was, sustain or not sustain? It was in vain urged that in a multitude of cases the decision of that question would not express the judgment of the house, who might be disposed to sustain in part, and not in whole; sustain as to a point of order, but not on the merits; therefore it was indispensable in order to the ends of justice that a minute should be formed, stating exactly wherein the appeal was sustained, and wherein it was refused. Thus in this case of Mr. Lowrie, before any decision of the case, the matter was referred to a committee to prepare a minute which should state how far the Assembly thought the complaint ought to be sus-

[* From article on "*General Assembly;*" *Princeton Review*, 1840, p. 415.]

tained, and how far the synod and presbytery were justifiable in what they had done.

§ 5. Finality of the Assembly's Judicial Decisions. [*]

[*Book of Discipline*, chap. vii., par. ii.—Comp. *Digest* of 1873, p. 533, 534, 596.]

The Rev. Archibald McQueen having married the sister of his deceased wife, was for that offence suspended by the Fayetteville Presbytery from the communion of the Church, and from the exercise of the office of the ministry. In 1842 this sentence was confirmed by the decision of the General Assembly. Having submitted to the sentence of suspension for about three years, he applied to be restored to the privileges of the Church and to the exercise of his ministry. The presbytery decided not to restore him. Of this decision he complained to the Assembly of 1845, and at the same time memorialized that body praying them to decree his restoration. In the Minutes of that Assembly, p. 32, is found the following record in relation to this subject. "The second order of the day was taken up, viz., the complaint and memorial of Archibald McQueen against the Presbytery of Fayetteville; and on motion, the Rev. Mr. Goldsmith was appointed to manage the case of Mr. McQueen in his absence, and agreeably to his request.

"The moderator having reminded the members that they were about to sit in a judicial capacity, the papers in the case were read in due order, and the original parties were fully heard. After which the following resolution was on motion adopted, viz.: *Resolved*, That the prayer of the memorialist be granted, so far as that the General Assembly recommend the presbytery of Fayetteville to reconsider their decision in the case of Rev. Archibald McQueen; and, if in their judgment it should appear conducive to the peace of the Church, and the promotion of religion in the region around them, to restore Mr. McQueen to the communion of the Church, and to the exercise of the functions of the gospel ministry, on the ground that in his case, the ends of discipline are attained, by the operation of the sentence under which Mr. McQueen has been lying for a period of three years."

The Presbytery of Fayetteville referred the matter to the Assembly of 1846, but the reference was dismissed, by a vote for its indefinite postponement. The presbytery then proceeded to take action in the case, and restored Mr. McQueen to the communion of the Church and to the exercise of his ministry. Against this decision Rev. Colin McIver and others complained and appealed to the Synod of North

[*From article on "*The General Assembly*;" topic; "*The McQueen Case*;" *Princeton Review*, 1847, p. 411.]

Carolina. The synod sustained the action of the presbytery. Mr. McIver and others complained of this decision of the synod to the General Assembly.

The judicial committee having reported the case to be ready for hearing, it was made the order of the day for Tuesday afternoon. When that hour arrived the case was called up, and the moderator, in a very impressive address, reminded the Assembly that they were about to sit in a judicial capacity. The papers in the case were then read in part. When the decision of the synod against which the complaint was entered had been read, a motion was made to dismiss the case, on the ground that no complaint could lie; the matter having been decided by a former Assembly. This motion was after considerable debate, laid aside in order that the complaint itself and the reasons on which it was grounded, should be read.

The motion was then made to dismiss the case, by the introduction of the following preamble and resolution, viz.:

"*Whereas*, The Rev. Archibald McQueen prosecuted a complaint before the Assembly of 1845, against the Presbytery of Fayetteville for refusing to restore him to the exercise of the gospel ministry, and did at the same time memorialize that Assembly to decree his restoration; and whereas that Assembly did take up and judicially entertain the said complaint, and pronounced judgment in the case by authorizing and recommending the presbytery to restore the said Archibald McQueen to the gospel ministry, provided that in the judgment of the presbytery it was wise so to do, and whereas the presbytery in the exercise of the discretion thus confided to them did restore Mr. McQueen, Therefore.

"*Resolved*, That the complaint of the Rev. Colin McIver and others against the Synod of North Carolina for having sustained the action of the Presbytery of Fayetteville in restoring the said Archibald McQueen, in accordance with the judicial decision of the Assembly of 1845, cannot be entertained by this house, and is hereby dismissed.

"In making this disposition of the above mentioned complaint, this General Assembly wishes it to be distinctly understood, that they do not mean to retract or modify any judgment hitherto expressed by any Assembly respecting the offence for which Mr. McQueen was suspended from the exercise of the gospel ministry. They simply declare that his case cannot be regularly brought before them by this complaint."

The above resolution was adopted, *ayes* 95, *nays* 53. This vote was not arrived at until Saturday morning at 12 o'clock, the question having been in the meantime debated at great length. The resolution was

opposed by Messrs. Gazley, Woodrow, Kerr, Berry, Pryor, Junkin, Mitchell, Johnston. It was advocated by Messrs. Cunningham, Hoge, Janeway, Hamil, Hunt, Hodge.

Those who sustained the resolution argued substantially thus: In the first place the question which this Assembly is called upon to decide, is the precise question decided by the Assembly of 1845. That question is, the propriety of restoring Mr. McQueen to the ministry. The Assembly of 1845 decided he ought to be restored; this Assembly is called upon to say he ought not to be restored. The former said the ends of discipline in his case were answered; we are called upon to say they have not been attained. It was strongly argued on the other side, that if the Assembly of 1845 could reverse the decision of the Assembly of 1842, this Assembly can reverse that of 1845. The Assembly of '45 did not reverse the decision of that of '42. The one Assembly said Mr. McQueen ought to be suspended from the ministry; the other, that having suffered that suspension for more than three years, he should be restored. To reverse a decision is to declare it erroneous and to render it inoperative. The Assembly of '45 did not sit in judgment on the decision of the Assembly of '42, and reverse it; the sentence of suspension was not pronounced erroneous or invalid; the punishment was declared to be sufficient. It was never, we suspect, before argued that to restore a suspended minister or Church member is to sit in judgment on the sentence of suspension. The questions therefore decided by the Assemblies of 1842 and 1845, were entirely different. In the present case the question is precisely the same. The thing complained of is the restoration of Mr. McQueen, the very thing which the Assembly of 1845 decided should be done. It is that decision which we are called upon to pronounce unconstitutional and wrong.

In the second place, the decision of this case in 1845 was a judicial decision, and being the decision of the court of last resort, is of necessity final. It requires no argument to show that the decision of one Assembly cannot be reviewed by a subsequent Assembly. There cannot be a remedy after the last, a court higher than the highest. One Assembly may indeed decide one case one way, and a following Assembly decide a similar case in another way. One may act on the principle that the marriage of a man with his wife's sister is null and void, and that therefore separation must precede restoration, and on this ground refuse to restore A. B. suffering under a sentence of suspension for such a marriage. Another Assembly may act on the principle that the separation of the parties to such a marriage is not an indispensable condition to a restoration to church privileges, and on this ground decide to restore C. D. to Church fellowship. In this way one Assembly may go counter to the decision of another Assembly; but it never can

be contended that one Assembly can review the judicial decision of a previous Assembly.

All therefore that can be required in the present case, is to show that the decision of 1845 in reference to the restoration of Mr. McQueen was really a judicial decision. It is readily conceded that if Mr. McQueen had merely memorialized the General Assembly to take action in his case, and the Assembly had proceeded to recommend to the presbytery to restore him, such a recommendation would be no bar to our entertaining the present complaint. One Assembly is not bound by the opinions or recommendations of another. Neither is any judicial decision binding as a precedent, as has already been remarked. But a case being once judicially decided by one Assembly, the decision is final. The only question, therefore, is whether the Assembly did decide judicially in favour of the restoration of McQueen.

A judicial decision, in the sense here intended, is the judgment of a court in the decision of a trial. McQueen complained of the Presbytery of Fayetteville for refusing to restore him to the ministry. The Assembly of 1845 entertained that complaint. They resolved themselves into a court for that purpose. The papers were read in order. The parties were fully heard. The court then proceeded to pronounce its judgment; which was that the ends of discipline had in his case been answered, and that the presbytery ought to restore him provided, in their judgment it was right to do so. This was in form and effect a judicial decision. It was the judgment of a court in a case regularly tried. Our book teaches us that a complaint may be sustained in whole or in part; absolutely and conditionally; on a condition to be performed by the complainant or by some other party. The Assembly might have restored Mr. McQueen on some conditions to be performed by himself—as for example, that he put away his wife, or that he make a public confession before the presbytery. No one can question that on the performance of such condition, the judgment of the Assembly, would have been final. The Assembly, however, wisely made the restoration dependent on the judgment of the presbytery, as to its propriety. The point really decided by the Assembly was that temporary suspension is an adequate punishment for the offence for which Mr. McQueen had been condemned. But whether that suspension had been, in his case, sufficiently protracted; whether it had wrought its proper effect upon him, or satisfied the demands of the Christian community of which he was a member, were points on which the presbytery was the only competent judge. The restoration, therefore, was made conditional on the judgment of the presbytery as to these points. As soon as the presbytery declared that, in their judgment, the interests of religion and the peace of the Church would be promoted by his

restoration, the only condition attached to his restoration was fulfilled, and the decision became final.

The objections urged on the other side, were principally these two: first, that the act of the Assembly of 1845, was a mere recommendation and not a judicial decision. And secondly, that even if a judicial decision it was null and void, because contrary to the constitution of the Church. The answer to the former of these objections is contained in the records of the Assembly, which show that the case was strictly a judicial one; that it was so regarded by the Assembly, and so treated and decided.

The answer to the second objection is two-fold. First, admitting the allegation that the decision was unconstitutional, it is still final, and cannot be reviewed because the decision of our highest court. It is not denied that there are numerous decisions of a like kind upon our records; and yet no one pretends that these decisions can be brought up and re-examined by this or any subsequent General Assembly. It often happens that the decisions of a supreme court are erroneous or unconstitutional. And when so considered, they ought to have no weight in the determination of similar cases, but they are not the less final and irreversible for all that.

But in the second place, it is denied that the decision in question was unconstitutional. The allegation is, that the constitution clearly declares that the marriage of a man with his deceased wife's sister, is incestuous, and therefore null and void in the sight of God and the Church, and consequently, that the parties to such a marriage cannot be admitted or restored to the privileges of the Church, unless the marriage relation between them be dissolved.

The answer to this is, in the first place, that the word incest, as the word manslaughter, and others of a similar kind, is a term of wide import, embracing under it acts of very different degrees of moral turpitude. Manslaughter may vary from justifiable homicide to murder in the first degree. And incest may vary from the lowest to the highest degree, according to the degree of relationship between the parties. It is to confound all our ideas of right and wrong, to shock the moral convictions of all sane men, to maintain that there is no difference between marriage within the prohibited degrees, when those degrees extend from a niece to a parent. No man believes this; and our Confession of Faith cannot be understood to teach any such doctrine. Admitting, therefore, that the Confession does pronounce the marriage in question incestuous, in the sense of being within the degrees of consanguinity and affinity prohibited in the word of God, it does not follow that no distinction is to be made between such a marriage and one between brother and sister, or parent and child. Such a distinction is made in

Scripture, and in the nature of man. It is made by every human being, and should be made by the Church, unless the Church means to bring herself into conflict with the Bible, and with the instinctive moral sentiments of men.

In the second place, the interpretation of the Confession insisted upon on the other side, is contrary to the uniform action of our highest judicatory for more than a hundred years. While the old Synod and the General Assembly have repeatedly censured the marriage in question, they have never to the best of our knowledge, required the parties to separate as a condition of their restoration to Church membership. They have, however, repeatedly decided just the reverse. See Minutes of the Assembly for 1810, &c.* It cannot be just to enforce an interpretation of the constitution contrary to the established action of the Church, from a period long anterior to the date of the admission of our oldest living members. The Church has in this respect always recognized the obvious distinction between what is unlawful and what is invalid, any thing contrary to the rule of duty laid down in the Scriptures, is unlawful; but many engagements and contracts which men ought not to form, are, when formed, nevertheless binding. It is unlawful, *i. e.* contrary to the rule contained in Scripture, for a Christian to marry a pagan, but such a marriage would be valid. In the same sense, it is unlawful for a man to marry a member of his own household, *i. e.* any one so connected with him, as to render it proper on the ground of that relationship, that they should live together as members of the same family. This is the obvious rule laid down in Scripture; but such a marriage *may* nevertheless be valid; and is valid, unless

* We cite this case as showing that the ground now taken was not only that maintained by our highest judicatory as far back as 1810; but was the ground uniformly taken by the Church in all such cases.

"A reference from Bethel Church, South Carolina, was overtured, requesting the decision of the Assembly in relation to a case in which a person had married the sister of his deceased wife. On motion,

"*Resolved*, That this reference be answered by the following decision of the Assembly of 1804. 'The Assembly having given repeated decisions on similar cases, cannot advise to annul such marriages, or pronounce them in such a degree unlawful as that the parties, if otherwise worthy, should be debarred from the privileges of the Church. But as great diversity of opinion appears to exist on such questions in different parts of the Church, so that no absolute rule can be enjoined with regard to them, that shall be universally binding and consistent with the peace of the Church; and as the cases in question are esteemed to be doubtful, the Assembly is constrained to leave it to the discretion of the inferior judicatories under their care, to act according to their own best light, and the circumstances in which they find themselves placed." *See Volume of Minutes of the General Assembly, published by the Board of Publication*, pp. 456, 457.

the relationship be one of those in reference to which separation of the parties is decreed in the word of God.

In the third place, the interpretation of the constitution, now contended for on the other side, is contrary to the practice of its very advocates. As members either of presbyteries, synods, or of the General Assembly, they are in constant communion with parties living in the relation in which McQueen and his wife stand to each other. It is not for one moment to be believed that these brethren would or could sit quietly, if within the bounds of their own presbyteries, Church members were allowed to enjoy their privileges undisturbed, who were notorious drunkards, or thieves, or who, being brothers and sisters, had intermarried. And yet, if we are correctly informed, within the bounds of this very Presbytery of Fayetteville, there is more than one such case. And sure we are that such cases are numerous in all parts of our Church, where such marriages are not forbidden by the law of the land. The only consistent course, therefore, is the one on which our Assembly has so long acted. That is, to censure such marriages, whenever brought before them judicially, but not to insist on the separation of the parties. It was, therefore, very proper in the Assembly of 1842, to sanction the action of the Presbytery of Fayetteville, in suspending Mr. McQueen; but it would be contrary to our long established usage for this Assembly to insist that he must repudiate his wife.

In the fourth place, the interpretation in question, is contrary to the Word of God. It supposes that all violations of the general law, "none of you shall marry any who is near of kin to him," are to be treated just alike; whereas the Bible makes a great distinction between the cases. For one offence against that law, the parties were to be burnt to death; for another, they were to be stoned; for another, excommunicated; for another, they were to die childless. These penalties being part of the judicial system of the Hebrews, are no longer binding. But the offences to which they are attached, being offences against a law having its foundation in the permanent relations of men, are offences still. And the fact that they were visited by divine appointment, with such different degrees of punishment, shows that they are not to be confounded.

The decision of the Assembly of 1845, that a man who had married his deceased wife's sister might be restored to the privileges of the Church, without repudiating his wife, is not contrary to the constitution, as that instrument has been interpreted for more than a hundred years, and as understood in the light of God's own word. All this, however, is really foreign to the present question, which is simply this, whether a man restored to the ministry by one Assembly, can be again

suspended on the ground that such restoration was unwise, injurious, or unconstitutional? Mr. McQueen was conditionally restored by the Assembly of 1845, and the condition having been fulfilled by the action of his presbytery, the decision became final.

It is due to the complete history of the marriage question before this Assembly, to add, that the following resolution was offered by the Rev. Dr. Patterson, viz: *Resolved*, That the General Assembly overture to the presbyteries the following question, viz: Shall that part of the fourth section of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Confession of Faith from 1 to 2, which says, "Nor can any such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man, or consent of parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife," be stricken out? This resolution was urged by the mover and Dr. Hoyt, solely on the ground that the law as it now stands in the book is inconsistent with the practice of the Church. The previous question was moved by Mr. Hunt, after very little discussion, and the resolution was rejected by a vote of 57 ayes to 89 noes.

A resolution offered by Mr. Berry, reproving, and bearing testimony against those presbyteries and Church sessions which allow the formation of this marriage relation, was also rejected without a division, and by a very large vote.

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