



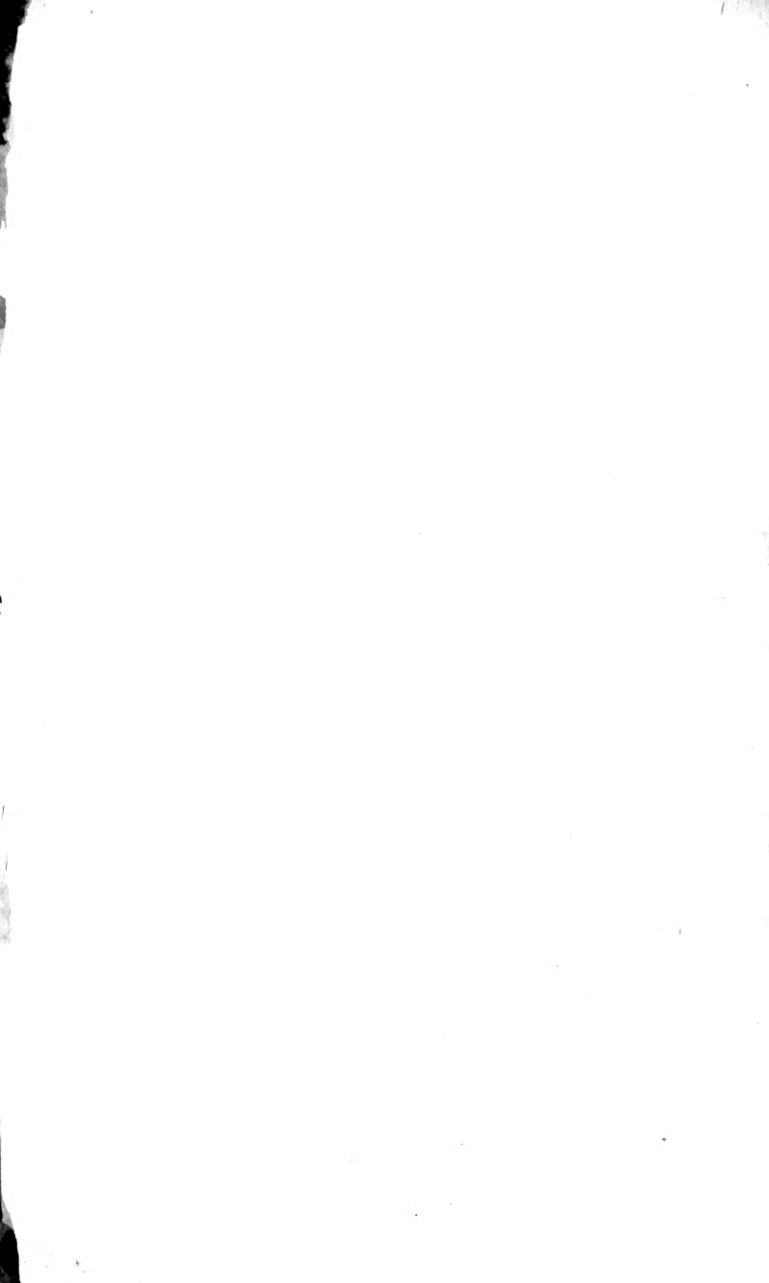
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CATECHISM

ON THE

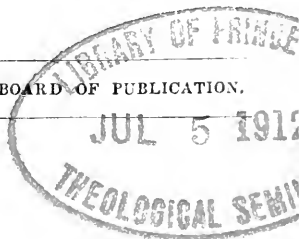
GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE

OF

The Presbyterian Church.

“Show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings-out thereof, and the comings-in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.”—EZEKIEL xliiii. 11.

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PREFACE.



THE Compilers of this Catechism do not publish it in an unkind spirit towards Christians of other denominations, nor with the view of provoking controversy, but for the following reasons:—

1. In these days of conflicting opinions they deem it a matter of essential importance to the Presbyterian Church, that her members, and especially the rising generation, be thoroughly instructed in their peculiar and distinguishing principles.

2. They regard as *unscriptural*, and therefore *erroneous*, the opinions which many are disposed to advocate,—that no particular form of Church government and discipline is of Divine institution, and that Churches may adopt whatever form seems to them most expedient.

3. They believe that the glory of Christ, the

extension of his kingdom, and the salvation of souls, are infinitely connected with the faithful administration of his ordinances and laws, according to the form of government which he has instituted in his word.

4. And *that*, they are persuaded, is the *Presbyterian form*.

A CATECHISM, &c.

CHAPTER I.

GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH.

QUESTION I. What is meant by the Church of Christ?

ANSWER. Either the whole body of his redeemed people, or the whole body of professing Christians on earth, and their children.

Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church. Eph. v. 25, 27.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved. Acts ii. 39, 47.

Q. 2. How is the Church, in this general sense, usually distinguished?

A. Into the invisible and the visible Church: the former, comprising the whole body of God's saints in heaven and on earth:

The general assembly of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Heb. xii. 23.

and the latter, the whole body of those who make an open profession of the truth as it is in Jesus.

To the angel of the Church which is in Pergamos, write—thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith—but thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam—which thing I hate. Rev. ii. 12—15.

Q. 3. Is the Greek word (*ecclesia*) translated Church in the Scriptures, confined to these two meanings?

A. No. It is used in various senses. It signifies,—

(1.) Any general assembly, or congregation of people.

For the assembly (*ecclesia*) was confused. Acts xix. 32.

(2.) An assembled council, either of civil judges,

It shall be determined in a lawful assembly, (*ecclesia*.) Acts xix. 39.

or of ecclesiastical rulers,

Tell it unto the Church, &c. (*ecclesia*.) Matt. xviii. 17.

The Church consists of rulers and ruled, Heb. xiii. 17. And according to the order of all well-regulated societies, complaints are laid before the rulers. It was so in the synagogues of the Jewish Church; and, therefore, as spoken by our Lord, and understood by his disciples, the word Church in this verse will mean the rulers.

(3.) Any particular congregation of Christians.

And the Church which is in his house. Col. iv. 15.

(4.) Several congregations or churches considered as one body under the same general judicature.

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, 1 Cor. i. 2; compared with xiv. 34, Let your women keep silence in the churches. Also, The Church which was at Jerusalem, Acts viii. 1, compared with xxi. 20, How many thousands, (or, as in the original,) myriads. A myriad is ten thousand. Many myriads must have made many congregations in Jerusalem,—all called the Church, under the jurisdiction of the apostles and elders, Acts xv. 6, and xvi. 4.

Q. 4. Is it a matter of indifference to what Church we belong?

A. No. It is our duty to join and adhere to that Church which is most agreeable to the Holy Scriptures in its doctrines, constitutions, forms, and discipline.

Try the spirits whether they are of God. 1 John iv. 1.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 1 Thess. v. 21.

Q. 5. Has the Christian Church, as a visible society, a form of government peculiar to itself?

A. Yes. It is a kingdom having laws enjoined by Christ, and its members consist of the rulers and the ruled.

My kingdom is not of this world, &c. John xviii. 36.

Obeys them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls. Heb. xiii. 17.

Q. 6. Where do we find the ordinances and laws by which it is governed?

A. In the word of God alone.

To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isa. viii. 20.

If any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. Rev. xxii. 18.

Q. 7. What is the form of Church government which is founded on and most agreeable to the word of God?

A. That which is called the *Presbyterian form*. It is so called from the word *Presbyter*, signifying *Elder*, which is the usual scriptural name for the rulers of the Church.

Q. 8. What are the general and leading principles of this form of Church government?

A. The supreme Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ; the official equality of its Ministers; the distinct office of Ruling Elder; with the ministerial authority, and judicial subordination of Church courts.

Q. 9. What is meant by the supreme Headship of Christ?

A. That He, and He alone, is the King and Head of the Church, and that no other person or persons have any authority to decree rites and ceremonies, or institute offices in the Church.

Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. Psa. ii. 6.

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 1 Pet. v. 3.

Even as Christ is the head of the Church. Eph. v. 23.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Matt. xxviii. 20.

Q. 10. How many kinds of office-bearers did Christ appoint in his Church?

A. Two kinds—extraordinary and ordinary officers.

And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. Eph. iv. 11.

Q. 11. What were the extraordinary?

A. Persons endowed with supernatural gifts, and extraordinary authority; as apostles, evangelists, prophets.

Q. 12. For what purpose were they appointed?

A. To make known the will of Christ, settle the constitution of the Church agreeably thereto, and commit the administration of it to ordinary and permanent officers.

For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting. Tit. i. 5.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

Q. 13. Had they any successors as extraordinary officers?

A. No. We do not read of any having

been appointed or ordained to succeed them in their higher office as apostles, evangelists, or prophets.

And when they had ordained them *elders* in every church. Acts xiv. 23.

Q. 14. What are the ordinary Church-officers appointed by Christ?

A. Presbyters or elders, (called also bishops or overseers,) and deacons.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church. Acts xx. 17.

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Philip. i. 1.

Q. 15. What is meant by the pastors of the Church?

A. The presbyters or elders, who teach as well as rule.

Q. 16. Are any of these possessed of superior rank and authority in the Church above the others?

A. No. They are all of the same order and of equal authority.

Q. 17. Are not bishops an order of ministers distinct from and superior to presbyters or elders?

A. They are not. Bishop is only another name for the presbyter or elder.

Q. 18. How does this appear?

A. (1.) Bishops are not called in any part of the New Testament by any peculiar title to distinguish them from presbyters—none are constituted prelates, or lords over God's heritage; but on the contrary, bishop or

overseer, and presbyter or elder, are applied to the same persons. Thus in Acts xx. 17, those are called "elders," who are afterwards in the 28th verse called "overseers," that is bishops; as the Greek word *episcopoi* denotes.

(2.) No where in Scripture are there imposed on bishops duties or powers distinct from those of presbyters; no where are their qualifications stated to be different. Thus the apostle reminds Titus,

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city. Tit. i. 5.

In the next verse he specifies their qualifications as elders; and in the 7th verse, in enumerating these qualifications, he says, *a bishop must be blameless, &c.*

(3.) While the two titles are thus applied to the very same persons—*presbyter* referring to the rank, *bishop* to the duties of both—these persons are equal in all respects; the only material difference that is discoverable being, that a higher degree of honour is to be conceded to those among them, who teach as well as rule.

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 1 Tim. v. 17. See also 1 Cor. xii. 28.

(4.) All pastors derive their office and authority from Christ, by the same commission, and in the same words.

And he said unto them, go ye into all the world,

and preach the gospel to every creature. Mark xvi. 15.

(5.) Since, then, all those who are called presbyters, are also called bishops; and those who are addressed as bishops, are also addressed as presbyters; since the same rank, powers, qualifications, and duties, are connected with both of these designations, it is manifest that they are not separate classes or orders, but one and the same. Therefore the presbyter is the only scriptural bishop.

Q. 19. What sort of officers were Timothy and Titus?

A. They were extraordinary and itinerant officers.

Do the work of an evangelist. Titus (is departed) unto Dalmatia. 2 Tim. iv. 5, 10.

Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you. 2 Cor. viii. 23.

I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. 2 Cor. xii. 18.

Q. 20. Does the word *angel*, as used in reference to the seven churches of Asia, in Revelations, designate an officer superior to the presbyter?

A. The word signifies merely a messenger, and may be applied to the teaching elder, or it may be taken to designate the moderator of the presbytery as the organ of communication; or it may signify the pastors of the churches in a collective capacity.

Some of you, that YE, &c.; among you. Rev. ii. 8, 10, 13.

Q. 21. What is required in a man, to warrant his being ordained to the ministry ?

A. He should be renewed by the Holy Ghost ; persuaded in his own mind that he is called to the work of the ministry ; resolved to endure hardship as a soldier of Christ ; sound in the faith ; blameless and holy in the habits of his life ; possess such measure of knowledge, human and divine, as may qualify him to answer the gainsayer ; and such gifts of utterance as may enable him to edify the church.

Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love. 2 Tim. ii. 13.

And the things that thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, sober, just, holy. Tit. i. 7.

Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth out of his treasure things new and old. Matt. xiii. 52.

Q. 22. Who has authority to ordain to offices in the Church ?

A. A presbytery or plurality of elders.

With the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 1 Tim. iv. 14.

Whom they set before the apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. Acts vi. 6.

Q. 23. Is there any other permanent office in the Church but that of teaching ?

A. There is also the office of ruling.

Salute all them that have the rule over you.
Heb. xiii. 24.

Q. 24. To whom does it belong to exercise this office ?

A. To the presbyters or elders.

And the apostles and elders came together for to consider the matter. Acts xv. 6.

They delivered them the decrees for to keep which were ordained of the apostles and elders.
Acts xvi. 4.

The elders that rule well. 1 Tim. v. 17.

Q. 25. How many classes of Elders are there ?

A. Two—the Teaching Elder, and the Ruling Elder.

Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 1 Tim. v. 17.

Teachers, helps, governments. 1 Cor. xii. 28.

Q. 26. Are these to be regarded as distinct orders of office-bearers, possessing different degrees of authority ?

A. No. They are to be regarded as occupying different departments of the same general office, and of equal authority, as rulers of the Church.

Q. 27. Why are they thus distinguished ?

A. Because the one class is ordained not only to rule, but also to teach, and the other to rule, as their distinctive duty.

Q. 28. What is the general duty of the Ruling Elders ?

A. To act along with the Pastor, as ‘helps and governments,’ in overseeing the Church, in exercising discipline and rule, and visiting the families and sick members for exhortation and prayer.

The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder—Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof. 1 Pet. v. 1, 2.

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him. James v. 14.

Q. 29. Is it a part of the Deacon’s office to teach or rule in the Church?

A. No. Deacons are not spoken of anywhere in Scripture, in connexion with these duties.

Q. 30. For what duty were they appointed?

A. To manage the temporal affairs of the Church, and especially to attend to the wants of the poor, in order that the apostles or teachers might give themselves continually to the ministry of the word, Acts vi. 1—4.

Q. 31. Did not Philip, who was a Deacon, teach and baptize?

A. Philip became an Evangelist, and as such, had authority to teach and baptize.

And we entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist. Acts xxi. 8.

Q. 32. Have the members of Churches the right of choosing their own Pastors and other office-bearers?

A. Yes. Churches have this privilege in common with all other free Societies.

And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen. Acts vi. 5.

Who was also chosen of the Churches to travel with us with this grace, &c. 2 Cor. viii. 19.

Q. 33. How should Christians discharge this duty?

A. In a spirit of meekness, humility, peace, and prayer, with a supreme regard to the glory of Christ, and the spiritual interests of the Church, without partiality, or respect of persons.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Phil. ii. 3.

Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Cor. x. 31.



CHAPTER II.

THE SUCCESSION OF MINISTERS, AND THE NOTION OF APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.

QUESTION 1. Had the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ any successors in their office?

ANSWER. They had: not however *as apostles*, for none could be an apostle except such as had seen the Lord,—but *as ministers*, in preaching the word and administering the

Sacraments, and taking the oversight. 2 Tim. iii. 2. Acts xiv. 23.

Q. 2. As distinct from Deacons, what are these spiritual office-bearers called?

A. They are sometimes called Bishops, that is, overseers of the flock—sometimes Presbyters, which means elders. They are elders by station, and overseers by its duties, but they are of *one* order—not two. Acts xx. 17—28. Tit. i. 5—7.

Q. 3. How were they ordained or set apart to their office?

A. By the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. 1 Tim. iv. 14. Acts xiii. 1.

Q. 4. What is the practice of those Churches which unscripturally assert that bishops and presbyters are two separate orders?

A. Their practice is to set apart one class of men by what they call *consecration*, and another by simple *ordination*.

Q. 5. Is there any rule or example in the New Testament for these two separate modes of setting apart ministers to their office?

A. There is none.

Q. 6. Is it not of importance that there should be a regular succession of scripturally appointed ministers?

A. Yes; as a matter of order, it is seemly in the Church of Christ, but not essential to the salvation of souls.

Q. 7. Why is it not essential?

A. Because a broken succession can never frustrate the efficacy of the word of God, and

an unbroken succession can never sanctify “the doctrines of devils.”

Q. 8. Who are they that rest all efficacy and salvation on what they call Apostolical Succession—that is, a derivation of their ministerial office through prelate-bishops from the hands of the apostles?

A. The Popish Church, and a large party in the prelatic Churches of England, of Ireland, and in Scotland and America.

Q. 9. Seeing these impute so much to it, can they prove from history that such a thing as unbroken succession exists among them?

A. Their assumption requires this at their hand; but though they affect to do this, yet they *cannot*. Their pretended catalogues are spurious or defective: for, 1st, There is no good evidence that the apostle Peter, from whom they pretend to derive their succession, was bishop of Rome, or that he ever visited that city; 2d, There is no good evidence as to *who* were the chief pastors of the church there for the first two or three generations; and, 3d, There is the clearest evidence which history can afford, that, in subsequent times, the succession was broken in numerous instances, and in innumerable ways. That it is “unbroken” is a popish fable.

Q. 10. Is not such a claim still farther invalidated on *protestant* grounds?

A. Most certainly it is; for if, as Protestants maintain, the Popish Church has become

an *apostate* church, its office-bearers have plainly lost their Master's commission, and they cannot impart it to others: or if they *can impart it*, we must also admit that they *can recall it*. Now, all Protestant bishops have been repeatedly excommunicated and deposed by the Romish Church; how then can they claim succession from it? Therefore, if Protestant clergy teach their people that all legitimate *authority*, necessarily and exclusively accompanies such "succession," the people are, on this principle, clearly bound *to leave them*, and return to the authority of Rome, which these clergy, on the one hand, foolishly acknowledge, and, on the other hand, inconsistently disobey.

Q. 11. Is this notion of unbroken succession objected to by us, because we are unable to advance any similar claim?

A. No: but because we regard it as idle and unscriptural. The apostle, when groundless pretensions were to be met, could say, "*Whereinsoever any is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.*" After the same manner, we are allowed to say, if any protestant communions may claim such a succession, the Presbyterian Church may.

Q. 12. How so?

A. Seeing that at the Reformation, her ministers were ordained by Popish Bishops, and seeing that all her ministers are them-

selves *bishops*, as before shewn; the likelihood that their succession would be afterwards broken, is less than it is in a church where only *one* minister, say in *five hundred*, is acknowledged to be a bishop, with power of transmitting it. In times of confusion it might be lost among Prelate-Bishops, and yet preserved among Presbyter or Parochial Bishops.

Q. 13. But are we to rest or to glory in this?

A. No, certainly: we are to look for proofs that our ministers are sent of God, in other things than in this, which is at best unprofitable and vain.

Q. 14. What evils arise from the assertion, by Protestant clergy, that "unbroken succession" is necessary to salvation, and from their assumption of the claim?

A. Great evils are apt to arise. It goes to unchurch themselves; because when what they assume and pronounce to be necessary to constitute a church, is historically disproved, they *by consequence* pronounce themselves excluded from the ministry, and their people from salvation. It tends to exalt the authority of man above that of God; tradition above scripture; points that are indifferent above truths that are essential. It fosters pride among the clergy, and exasperates differences among Protestants. It strengthens Popery, because it concedes one of its most arrogant demands; and it strengthens infidelity, because, when ministers of the gospel

maintain dogmas, which, on being slightly sifted, are found to be so foolish and fictitious as this, they impair their own credit in proclaiming to men facts and doctrines which are founded in truth and necessary to salvation.



CHAPTER III.

THE CONSTITUTION AND JURISDICTION OF CHURCH COURTS.

QUESTION 1. What is the nature and extent of that authority which Christ has given to the rulers of the Church?

ANSWER. It is merely ministerial and subordinate.

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy. 2 Cor. i. 24.

Q. 2. What is meant by ministerial authority?

A. It is authority, as ministers or servants of Christ, to proclaim, apply, and execute his laws for promoting the order and spiritual edification of the Church.

Q. 3. What is meant by subordinate authority?

A. It is the subjection of the inferior to the superior Courts of the Lord's house—as of

Session to Presbytery, and of Presbytery to Synod, and of all to Christ.

Q. 4. How is this rule or authority exercised ?

A. By the Presbyters or Elders assembled in Session, Presbytery, Synod, or General Assembly.

And the Apostles and Elders came together for to consider of this matter. Acts xv. 6.

Q. 5. What is a Church Session ?

A. It is the minister (who teaches and rules) along with the Ruling Elders of any particular congregation met together as a Church Court. The Minister acts as Moderator or President ; and the Court thus formed may be called a Congregational Presbytery. This court, with the superior judicatures, is founded on the model of the more ancient synagogue courts, for purposes of government and discipline.

Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, and place such over them to be rulers. Exodus xviii. 21.

If thy brother trespass against thee, and if he neglect to hear thee, tell it to the church. Matt. xviii. 15—17. See also 1 Cor. v. 4, 13.

Q. 6. Who are subject to the authority of Session ?

A. All the members of the church of which it has the oversight.

Q. 7. What is the duty of each church or congregation towards the Session ?

A. To respect and uphold that authority

which is given it by Christ ; to render a cheerful obedience to its decisions in the Lord ; and cordially co-operate in the plans of usefulness which it recommends.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. And esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

Q. 8. Of what does a Presbytery consist ?

A. Of the Ministers of a convenient district, with a Ruling Elder from each congregation.

Q. 9. What is the extent of its jurisdiction ?

A. It extends to its own members, and to the several sessions and congregations belonging to it. It is a Court of Appeal from Sessions, and has the general oversight of the congregations under its care. An appeal lies from its decision to the Synod.

Q. 10. Of what does a Synod consist ?

A. It consists of the Ministers of three or more Presbyteries with a Ruling Elder to represent each Session. In some branches of the Presbyterian church the Synod is the supreme court of jurisdiction ; but in other, more numerous and extended churches, such as those of Scotland, of Ireland, and of the United States, there is also a General Assembly, composed of a specific number of Ministers and Ruling Elders, appointed by the Presbyteries.

Q. 11. Does the New Testament furnish

any model of Presbyterian government by such Church Courts?

A. It does, in the xv. chapter of Acts.

Q. 12. How does the xv. chapter of Acts establish that form of church government?

A. The facts therein recorded for our example, furnish its outline or general principles. In the church at Antioch, a question was disputed, affecting the faith and practice of all the churches of Christ. Ver. 1, 2: It was referred for settlement, to an assembly to be convened at Jerusalem. Ver. 2: The assembly consisted of the rulers of the church, but was open to the people. Ver. 6, 12: It acted in a deliberative capacity. Ver. 7, 12, 13: It decided, not by direct inspiration, but by discussion and consideration, under the ordinary guidance of the Holy Ghost. Ver. 7, 22, 28: One member of the assembly proposed a resolution, which was unanimously adopted as its decision on the question. Ver. 19, 22: The decree thus enacted, was authoritative, and extended to all the churches. Ver. 28; and xvi. 4: These principles are applied in government, with all the necessary and expedient details, to particular congregations, by the **SESSION**; to the churches of a convenient district, by the **PRESBYTERY**; and to the whole Church, by **SYNOD**, or **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**.

Let all things be done decently, and in order.
1 Cor. xiv. 40.

CHAPTER IV.

DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

QUESTION 1. What is the Scriptural character of a Christian church?

ANSWER. It is a society of persons separated from the rest of mankind to the service of God.

They are not of the world. John xvii. 16.

Q. 2. By what means is this character to be preserved?

A. By the faithful exercise of a Scriptural discipline.

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump. 1 Cor. v. 7. (See context.)

Q. 3. What should be the conduct of a Church Court in exercising discipline?

A. It should be, 1st, ORDERLY.

Let all things be done decently, and in order. 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

2d. MEEK.

Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Gal. vi. 1.

3d. SOLEMN.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

4th. IMPARTIAL.

Doing nothing by partiality. 1 Tim. v. 21.

Q. 4. When is a person to be regarded as making a *credible* profession of faith in Christ, and to be admitted to the Communion?

A. That man is to be viewed as making a credible profession of religion, who manifests an acquaintance with the leading doctrines of the gospel, who declares himself a believer in these doctrines, who professes that, so far as he can judge, his heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, and who maintains a conduct and conversation becoming the Gospel.

With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Rom. x. 10.

And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized. Acts xvi. 33.

Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance. Luke iii. 8.

Q. 5. But did not the apostles receive persons into the Church by baptism, without waiting for any evidence of the *credibility* of their profession?

A. All who then joined the Church, did so at the risk of liberty, property, and life; and this of itself was a most satisfactory evidence of their sincerity in making such profession.

Q. 6. Do the members of the Church, after their admission, continue subject to the authority of the Rulers?

A. Yes. Such authority on the one part,

and obedience on the other, are most plainly sanctioned by the law of Christ.

Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without, God judgeth. 1 Cor. v. 12, 13.

Obey them that have the rule over you. Heb. xiii. 17.

Q. 7. For what offences are members liable to trial, and Church censure?

A. It would be wrong to subject a member to Church censure, or even trial, for every misdemeanour; but they are to be subjected, for,—

(1.) **ERRORS IN DOCTRINE.**

A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject. Tit. iii. 10.

(2.) **IMMORALITY IN PRACTICE.**

Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Eph. v. 11. See also, Rev. ii. 20.

(3.) **DESPISING THE AUTHORITY, OR ORDER, OR ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH.**

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 2 Thess. iii. 6.

(4.) **NEGLECTING THE PUBLIC, DOMESTIC, OR SECRET DUTIES OF RELIGION.**

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Heb. x. 25.

Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know

thee not, and upon THE FAMILIES THAT CALL NOT ON THY NAME. Jer. x. 25.

(5.) SLOTHFUL IDLENESS.

If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Tim. v. 8.

(*Finally.*) THE VIOLATION OF ANY CLEAR SCRIPTURE PRECEPT OR ECCLESIASTICAL ORDINANCE.

The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, &c., &c. 1 Tim. i. 9.

Q. 8. Does not Scripture attach a solemn importance to the censures of the Church?

A. Yes. For the sentence, when pronounced according to Christ's law, is ratified in heaven; and if the individual be wholly "cut off" from the Church, he is delivered up to Satan, the god of this world, as a subject of his visible kingdom.

Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Matt. xviii. 18.

To deliver such an one unto Satan. 1 Cor. v. 5.

Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme. 1 Tim. i. 20.

Q. 9. What is the duty of those who have been judged worthy of censure?

A. To humble themselves under it,—to

submit to it, to repent and do their first works.

Behold this self same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge. 2 Cor. vii. 11.

Submit yourselves. Heb. xiii. 17.

Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works. Rev. ii. 5.

Q. 10. Is it lawful ever to restore to the communion of the Church one who has been suspended, or cut off?

A. Yes, it is. Whenever sufficient evidence has been afforded of repentance and reformation, he may be restored.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness. Gal. vi. 1.

Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them. John xx. 23.

Q. 11. Are any censures to be made public?

A. Yes, such as are occasioned by offences which from their magnitude and publicity, are calculated to bring scandal on the Church.

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of MANY. 2 Cor. ii. 6.

Them that sin rebuke BEFORE ALL, that others also may fear. 1 Tim. v. 20.

Q. 12. Does any sentence of the Church

exclude an individual from hearing the gospel preached?

A. No. It is to be preached to the most guilty, (See 1 Cor. xiv. 25;) and it is especially the duty of such to attend on the ministration of the Word.

Q. 13. Is injury done to the people of God, by the neglect of discipline in the Church?

A. Yes. When the Church is not kept pure, godly persons will be deterred from joining it.

But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no, not to eat. 1 Cor. v. 11.

I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 1 Cor. x. 20.

And those in the Church who are, or may become, pious, will be obliged to separate from it.

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Rev. xviii. 4.

Q. 14. Is injury done to the sinner by such neglect?

A. Yes. By it he will be confirmed in his carelessness, self-deception, and sin.

They have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace. With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthen the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life. Ezek. xiii. 10, 22.

Q. 15. May not a church so far apostatize by the neglect of discipline, as to cease to be a church of Christ, and become a synagogue of Satan?

A. Yes. This has sometimes happened.

I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Rev. ii. 9.

Them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews. Rev. iii. 9.

Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Rev. iii. 16.

Q. 16. What *benefits* may arise to the *offender* from the exercise of discipline?

A. By this he sees sin to be evil and shameful.

If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 2 Thess. iii. 14.

And if he receive the censure in a proper spirit, it has a powerful tendency to humble, reclaim, and edify him.

Now I rejoyce not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance, for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of. 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.

Q. 17. What benefits arise to the Church from the faithful exercise of discipline?

A. (1.) Hereby sinners are discouraged from hypocritically joining the Church, and the leaven which might infect the whole lump is purged out.

Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump. 1 Cor. v. 7.

(2.) The number of her true converts is increased.

As they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the Apostles and Elders, which were at Jerusalem; and so were the Churches established in the faith, and INCREASED IN NUMBER daily. Acts xvi. 4, 5.

And great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things. And of the rest, durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them. And believers were THE MORE ADDED to the Lord, MULTITUDES both of men and women. Acts v. 11, 13, 14.

(3.) Her holiness is manifested.

Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. John ii. 16.

(4.) The honour of her Head is vindicated.

The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. Ezek. xxxvi. 23.

(5.) And God's gracious presence and blessing secured.

Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

Q. 18. But may not the offender, by the exercise of discipline, be led to forsake the

preaching of the Gospel, and thus become more hardened?

A. As discipline is an ordinance of God, we must expect the *neglect* rather than the *exercise*, of it to harden the sinner; but if, in his pride and obstinacy, he disregard the advantages which flow from it, when received in a right spirit, the rulers of the Church are not to be deterred from *their* duty, any more than the minister of the Gospel from preaching, because many are hardened by it, and have their guilt and danger increased.

To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. 2 Cor. ii. 15.

These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. Jude 19.

Q. 19. Are the rulers of the Church deeply responsible for the right exercise of discipline?

A. They who hold office by appointment from Christ, whose faithfulness will be followed by so many and great blessings, whose negligence must be the source of such deep and lasting injuries to the Church, dishonour to Christ, and evil to sinners—should feel themselves under a most solemn responsibility, in this matter, and must expect to be called to a most strict account, at the day of judgment, for the part which they act, in relation to it.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 1 Pet. v. 4.

Obeys them that have the rule over you, and sub-

mit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, *as they that must give account*; that they may do it with *joy* and not with *grief*. Heb. xiii. 17.



CHAPTER V.

THE VOLUNTARY AND LEGAL MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDINANCES.

QUESTION 1. Is it the duty of Christians to contribute of their substance to the maintenance of religious ordinances?

ANSWER. It is both their duty and their privilege.

Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass. Exod. xxxv. 5.

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Gal. vi. 6. See also 1 Cor. ix. 3—15.

Q. 2. In what spirit is such contribution to be made?

A. It is to be made freely, bountifully, thankfully, and devoutly.

He shall offer of his own voluntary will. Lev. i. 3.

He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7.

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,

and will call upon the name of the Lord. Psa. cxvi. 17.

Q. 3. In circumstances and places where the ordinances and ministry of the pure gospel are already sufficiently provided for, are Christians, for this reason, to withhold their contributions ?

A. No : they ought, in such case, to multiply them in behalf of the heathen and others who have not obtained the same advantage : and thus the gospel of Jesus Christ will be extended, till all nations shall serve him.

Q. 4. Ought rulers and nations, as such, to protect the people in the free and full exercise of their religious privileges ?

A. Yes : because rulers derive their authority from God, and therefore they are bound to use it for his glory : Prov. viii. 15. Nations, also, receive from him national blessings, and therefore they are bound to render unto him national service : Jer. xviii. 7, 10.

Q. 5. Have you any other reasons to adduce ?

A. Yes. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is, as Mediator, King of kings, and therefore these, officially as well as personally, are required to bow to his sceptre, and to maintain his cause. Rev. xix. 16. Psa. ii.

2. Because the end of civil government is, not only to repress what is evil, but to cherish what is good : Rom. xiii. 4.

3d. Because wherever the religion of Christ, especially in its pure Presbyterian form, has

been so maintained, there society has been more orderly, virtuous, and enlightened, than otherwise.

Q. 6. Is it proper or expedient for a government to endow and support *any* particular form of religion?

A. No. Experience has demonstrated that such establishments are oppressive to conscience, partial, liable to great abuse, injurious to the spirituality of the Church, by making it a mere appendage to the state.



CHAPTER VI.

OBJECTION TO OTHER CHURCHES.

QUESTION 1. Is not the Presbyterian Church properly denominated Protestant?

ANSWER. It is. Because, in common with other Reformed Churches, it professes to adhere to the solemn protest which was taken by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, against the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome.

Q. 2. What are some of those errors in that Church, against which the Reformed Churches protest?

A. They protest, among many other things, against the doctrine of the Pope's supremacy. Matt. xxiii. 8, 11. Eph. ii. 19, 20. They

protest against the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church. Acts xvii. 11. 2 Cor. i. 24. Against the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the sacrifice of the mass. Acts iii. 20, 21. Heb. ix. 24—28. x. 12—14. Against the doctrine that the good works of the saints are meritorious in the sight of God. Isa. lxiv. 6. Eph. ii. 8, 9. Rom. xi. 6. Against the doctrine of purgatory, and that prayers ought to be offered for the dead. Luke xvi. 22, 23. xxiii. 43. 2 Cor. v. 8. 1 John i. 7. Rev. xiv. 13. Against the doctrine that saints, images, and relics, ought to be worshipped. Exod. xx. 4, 5. Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 8, 9. Against the doctrine, that the Scriptures ought not to be read by the laity. Deut. vi. 6, 7. Matt. xxii. 29. John v. 39. Against the doctrine, that celibacy, and abstinence from certain kinds of meat, are connected with exalted piety, and superior sanctity of character. Lev. xxi. 10, 13. 1 Cor. vii. 2. 1 Tim. iv. 3. iii. 2. 1 Cor. viii. 8. The Presbyterian Reformed Churches bear their testimony against these and many other errors of the Church of Rome, as being anti-Christian, and destructive to the souls of men.

Q. 3. In what light do Presbyterians view Protestant Established Churches, such as those of England and Ireland?

A. They regard them as Churches of Christ; but, at the same time, so unscriptural in their constitution and administration, as to oblige them to maintain a separate communion.

Q. 4. What is there in the constitution and administration of these Churches, to which Presbyterians object?

A. 1. They object to the power and authority, in spiritual matters, which these churches declare to be vested in the supreme magistrate, whether male or female: "That the king hath full power and authority to hear and determine all manner of causes ecclesiastical, and reform and correct all vice, sins, errors, heresies, whatsoever."

2. They object to these Churches, that, according to their constitution, the Parliament of the nation, consisting of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Quakers, Papists, and Infidels, have the power of determining how many prelates, and pastors, they shall have.

3. They object, that in consequence of this control and authority which these Churches concede to the civil government in religious things, they are rendered incapable of reforming, purifying, or extending themselves, or correcting any errors or abuses in their system.

4. Holding, as Presbyterians do, that Christ has ordained in his word, all the institutions which his infinite wisdom judged necessary for the edification of his spiritual body, and has taught the best possible manner in which they are to be administered and observed, they object to the power claimed by these Churches to decree rites and ceremonies in the worship of God, and to alter the mode

in which he has appointed his own institutions to be observed. Prov. xxx. 6. Rev. xxii. 18.

Q. 5. What objections have Presbyterians to the Episcopal Church in general?

A. They cannot assent to such ceremonies as the following, which this Church has decreed, and which have no warrant in Scripture:—The numerous festivals appointed and observed by this Church,—sponsors in baptism,—the practice of sponsors making vows in the name of the child, and of taking on them obligations which cannot in the nature of things be fulfilled, and which parents alone can fulfil,—using the sign of the cross in baptism,—confirmation by a prelate,—bowing at the name *Jesus*,—kneeling at the Lord's Supper,—the private administration of the Lord's Supper,—consecration of churches, burying grounds, and the sacramental elements,—the superstitious use made of the bread and wine remaining after the communion,—and the absolution of the sick. Matt. xv. 9.

Q. 6. As some of these ceremonies appear unimportant in themselves, why is the observance of them a ground of serious objection?

A. Because such observance encourages superstition and will-worship; is opposed to the sufficiency of the Scriptures, as the only rule of faith and practice; and upholds the unscriptural and pernicious principle, that men may innocently and profitably add to

the institutions of Christ, and the terms of communion in his Church. Col. ii. 20, 23.

Q. 7. Have Presbyterians any further objections to the Episcopal Church?

A. Yes. They cannot approve of 'The Book of Common Prayer,' considering that the use of it tends to prevent the exercise of spiritual gifts, and induce formality and deadness in devotion; and that, in its general form and construction, it is imperfect and erroneous, containing useless repetitions,—unsuitable petitions,—lessons from the Apocrypha,—a confused and irregular arrangement of the prayers,—and bears so general a resemblance to the mass-book, from which many of its prayers are taken.

They object to the exercise of Church government, and the power of ordination being vested exclusively in prelates. 1 Tim. iv. 14.

They cannot admit the doctrine, distinctly taught in the Prayer Book, that by water-baptism an infant is 'regenerated,' 'made a member of Christ,' and 'the child of God.' Jas. i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23.

They lament the extreme laxity of these churches, in reference to discipline.

Q. 8. In what light do Presbyterians view those Churches called Independent, or Congregational?

A. They regard all of them who profess what are termed the doctrines of grace, as being also churches of Christ; but object to their peculiar constitution,—the principle of which is, that particular congregations are

Churches independent of each other, and not subordinate to superior courts, and that all the members of the Church have authority to exercise government, and to vote in every case of discipline on which the Church is called to decide.

Q. 9. Why do they object to this system of Church government?

A. (1.) It is inconsistent with the oneness of the Church, as founded on the oneness of her Divine Head,—her faith,—her baptism, and the whole system of her laws and ordinances, and with the description given of her in Scripture, by allusion to the human body, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 26, 27; to a kingdom, John xviii. 36; and to an army under one commander, Rev. xx. 9.

(2.) It is opposed to the constitution of the primitive Church. (See chapter 1, question 3, section 4.)

(3.) It confounds the distinction plainly expressed in Scripture, between the rulers of the Church, and those who are ruled. Heb. xiii. 17, 24.

(4.) Because of the disadvantages to which it is liable.

First, From the undue control which people have it in their power to exercise over their pastor. Should he, by faithfully preaching some truth disliked by them, or by re-proving some sin to which they were addicted, give any offence, or should the people at any time take a fancy for another preacher,

he is liable at once to be expelled from his office.

Second, From the want of any court of review to which an individual might appeal, in case of being aggrieved in judgment, through prejudice or party feeling, or improper influence in the congregation of which he is pastor or member, Acts xv. 2.

Third, From the inability of separate congregations to accomplish one of the most important purposes for which the Church has been established on earth,—that is, to extend the kingdom of Christ. Independents, when making efforts to propagate the gospel, are obliged to act, not in the character of a Church, but as members of promiscuous societies.

CONCLUSION.

Q. 10. What then are the general considerations which should attach Presbyterians with zealous affection to their own church?

A. Its Scripture character, its freedom from those many and weighty objections which lie against other systems, and the religious privileges and advantages which its members enjoy.

Q. 11. What are these privileges and advantages?

A. Having the right of choosing their own pastors and rulers,—freedom from despotic power on the one hand, and anarchy

on the other, in the government of their Church—the means and opportunities of bringing before the rulers of the church, for investigation and judgment, unfaithfulness in Ministers and Elders, offences of Church members, and errors in doctrine,—the privilege and power of appeal from one Church Court to another, when their rights as citizens of Zion are injured or assailed; and such an ecclesiastical constitution and arrangement of their church, that it contains within itself the capacity of reforming abuses and errors, and has the best machinery for extending the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom, and perfecting the body of Christ.

Q. 12. How should Presbyterians employ and improve these privileges?

A. They should use them thankfully and faithfully for their own edification,—the bringing other churches to conformity to the laws of Christ's house, and for prosecuting Missionary labours in their own land, and throughout the world, until all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.



