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PRESBYTERY.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD OF CINCINNATI,

IN THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

OXFORD, OHIO, OCTOBER 18, 1850,

BY

SAMUEL W. FISHER.

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## S E R M O N .

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“ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”—*Ephesians* iv. 15, 16.

In the human body, far more strikingly than among the brutes, the *head* occupies the chief seat of dignity. Here is the wonderful organism of thought; here the source of those vital currents that traverse the entire system and flow to the extremities. From this comes forth the clear view, the profound understanding, the energetic purpose, the vigorous will. It is this dome of the ever-thinking soul, that proclaims man's supremacy above brute nature. With this erect he treads the earth, its acknowledged lord. The *body*, dependent on, and so subordinate to, this intelligent chief, has its own work and its own characteristics. It is constructed of many parts, adapted to diverse operations, bearing various forms. It has its limbs without, as the executives of the will of the indwelling spirit; while within, it is furnished with that wonderful mechanism, which, independently of the volitions, elaborates the blood, and diffuses and maintains the animal vitality through the entire system. To this human form the apostle in our text compares the Christian Church.

Christ is the head, occupying the position of highest dignity, containing in himself the fullness of that spiritual life which flows in vital currents to the extremities of the Church; while, as the possessor of infallible wisdom, he presides over all her movements, and as the inheritor of all power, he secures to her protection and blessing. The Church itself is the body, dependent on him for vital communications, and wholly subordinate to his rule. This Church is not, in form, distinguished by some single feature. Like the body, it has its trunk and limbs. The diversity of gifts, of offices, and operations which belong to the former, are employed by the apostles as a fine illustration of the diverse offices and operations characteristic of the latter. Instead of all being under obligation to minister in the same manner to the edification of the brethren, there is everywhere inculcated a striking diversity both of original gifts and ecclesiastical offices, which are to be exercised and filled for the good of all. Some are set apart to this work, others to that; some minister at tables; some rule with authority; some work miracles; some preach the truth; some declare the future; some, with infallible certainty, settle the foundations of the Christian faith, and complete the canon of the inspired word. "For the body is not *one* member, but many." "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased him. Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all

apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"

The Church, thus impressively placed before us, was not, like a prairie, a dead, monotonous level, unbroken by hill and vale, unvariegated by lofty mountains and far-sounding cataract; nor was it like a village built thereon, in which every house bore the same outward form, was limited to precisely the same dimensions, in which no parthenon lifted itself above humbler dwellings, and no vast temple, or palace, stood forth in singular majesty. It is not a Church of a single office, a membership undistinguished by orders, governors, and diversities of offices. It is indeed a Church in its outward form, fitted to the undeveloped and elementary state of youth; furnished with some gifts and offices that either ceased by necessity with the death of their possessors, or ceased from the passing away of the emergency which gave them existence. It possessed officers, who, by the very nature of their office, were incapacitated from having successors. It had its apostles, its prophets, its miracle workers; a mighty enginery through which the divine energy wrought out the establishment of Christianity in ways the most splendid, and manifestly supernatural; and at length brought forth that greatest miracle on which the eyes of all coming generations might rest, even the New Testament Scriptures—an enginery, however, too cumbersome for Christianity when once established, and destined, with all its magnificence, to take its place beside the splendid ritual of the economy of Moses. Just as that Moses, a single, mighty mind, a general of despotic power, was essential to the establishment of that tabernacle and priestly service, that

dispensation which was to educate the people of God till Shiloh came; so was the apostolic hierarchy, and the out-flaming splendor of miracles, essential to the establishment of Christianity. And just as that despotism fell to the ground, when the exigency that had created it passed away, leaving to Israel a government of simple republicanism, so did the apostles, and prophets, and workers of miracles retire from the stage forever, when the necessity which gave them to the Church had ceased. They who saw Christ on earth; they who penetrated into the future and brought forth its mysteries; they who spake with tongues and suspended the laws of nature, that through them divine wisdom might gather about the cross the convictions of the world, left for future generations their testimony embalmed in the word of God. Their extraordinary mission ended, the Church is committed to this inspired volume for her guidance and defense; while through the offices and gifts that remain to her, she seeks to train the world for heaven.

It is the doctrine of the text, that each part of the Church of Christ has its own appropriate work, in the performance of which not only itself, but the whole body is vitally and happily affected. This work is not here divided off and distinguished. In other parts of Scripture, the leading offices and departments of labor are marked out; but in the main it is left to the members of the household of faith, in the exercise of an intelligent piety, to discern and perform that which belongs to them individually and collectively. It is not proposed in this discourse to enumerate the various duties that rise out of the relation of Christians to each other, and the world. I wish rather to limit the discussion to those more promi-



ment works and offices which give form to the Church before the world—the outward machinery through which her power manifests itself in the view of men. In doing this, you will permit me to reverse the usual process, and instead of proceeding from results back to causes, to advance from causes to results. Let us seek to determine, from the known principles of man's nature and the truth of God, what will be a truly spiritual and healthy development of the body of Christ; what will be the various offices and operations essential to its most perfect form in the ordinary state of Christianity; let us descend to its original elements, and, keeping in our view the mixed and imperfect nature to be moulded, and the character of the truth through which that nature is to be changed into the fullness of the divine image, let us proceed thence to trace out its unfolding according to the condition and necessities of a life on earth.

The word "Church" is originally a term which, as Hooker well observes, "art hath devised, thereby to sever and distinguish that society of men which professeth the true religion, from the rest which profess it not." The "ecclesia" \* of Scripture points to the assemblage of those whom God hath elected out of the world, to be his disciples. When, then, a number of such persons are found together, as either are, or suppose they are renewed by the grace of God, and receive the Saviour as their redeemer, and the word of God as their infallible rule of life, their first want will be some *outward* union, enabling them to enjoy the means of grace, and the ordinances of

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\* "Ecclesia," or Church, the elect, the called out of, the separate.

the Gospel, the materials for individual improvement, such as mere isolation never can bestow. Christianity, indeed, while it is individual and personal in its commencement, yet is social and general in the sympathies and tendencies it creates; while in its origin it begins in the single heart, shut up to itself and God, yet in its progress it creates an expansive affection that, like the sunlight, seeks objects on which to pour itself, and around which it may shed the fullness of its own joy; so that he who yesterday felt isolated from the world, a guilty sinner, stricken by the arrow of justice, and flying from the sight of men to the solitude of his chamber, or to the recesses of the forest; to-day a penitent believer, pants for the communion of saints, the comfort of their sympathy, the joy of their affection, the instruction of their experience, the quickening influence of their prayers, and the exaltation and guidance of their public worship. By a law of sympathy and affection and interest, as true, as certain as that which urges the drops trickling from the mountain sides to unite in rivulets, and from rivulets to form rivers, do individual Christians flow together into Christian assemblies for mutual edification, and the more rapid increase and perfection of the body of Christ. There is a law of Christian union and unity which springs into existence contemporaneously with the birth of a soul into the kingdom of God, and instantly begins to attract together the scattered members of the visible Church. The outward necessity of combining to maintain the ordinances of the Gospel, and promote the advancement of religion among men, is based upon a secret law of affection and sympathy, which thus admirably secures spiritual harmony and unity long before the mere necessities of the Christian life have originated

a visible and formal organization. "Behold how these Christians love one another," antedates the form and regimen of the visible Church, and insures their existence. This primary assembly, without organization, without government, holds the elements of a Church of Christ. It is not, indeed, a perfectly formed Church, fitted for the most successful action; but it is the beginning of such a Church. The company of believers who thus assemble to worship God, and administer the ordinances of the Gospel, and assist each other to spread the knowledge of Christ among men, although they have not attained the form of a well-developed and fitly-organized Christian Church, are yet a portion of the body of Christ, and the materials of such a Church gathered together for a healthful adjustment.

One of the first wants felt by such an assemblage, will be the *terms of communion*. For as truth, doctrine, principles are ultimately the source of feeling, and so of harmony, it must first be determined what truths these individuals recognize as the platform on which they shall all stand. As the object of such a union is Christian communion, Christian worship, Christian ordinances, and the advancement of Christian interests, it must first be settled what this communion and worship, these ordinances and interests involve as essential. Hence, from the necessities of the human mind, from a necessity inherent in the organization of a Church of Christ, from the necessity of distinguishing it from the Church of the devil,\* and for the mutual understanding and communion of its members, the *creed*, or the expression of that which forms the bond of such union, arises. We freely admit and rest

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\* Rev. ii. 9.

upon the opinion, that the word of God is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the ultimate standard and final test of all doctrines that affect the salvation of men. But when it is said the Bible, and that alone, is our creed, we wish to know what, in your opinion, that book teaches. If it contained merely a collection of abstract, colorless, passionless propositions; a series of axioms, of lines and angles, about which there could be no mistake, and of which there could be no perversion and misrepresentation, then for one man to profess to receive it, would be as plain to another as the professed reception of the axioms of geometry. Instead of this, the Bible is addressed to the *whole* man, not merely to his reason and intuitive perceptions, but through them to his affections, his hopes, and his fears. Yea, it rises far above reason, and brings forth the openings of deep mysteries, the beginnings of vast truths, to us visible only in part, while the rest stretches far away into the profoundness of the being and eternity of God. It staggers reason by its amazing communications; it appeals to faith to bear up the burden of its lofty teachings; it crosses the earthly passions at the very outset of its announcements; it overrides all human authority, prostrates all human dignity, and seeks not to save a man till it has convinced him that he is lost; or to exalt him to riches and purity, till it has made him poor and vile, and utterly without strength. Such a Bible as this, in such a world as this, uttering itself in figures, in allegories, in all the forms of human language, moulded by all the different powers of the intellect and the heart, becomes itself a discipline to the mind of the world, and its partial or full reception by the intellect and affections, as much a matter of trial as the exercise of faith in the Son of God, with which it

ultimately unites. It is a book whose teachings may be wrested, by those who are so purposed, to their own destruction; it is a book that wickedness may distort, and prejudice pervert. They have thus wrested it in every age. In proportion to its excellence; its adaptation to the human mind; its glory, transcendent above all other writings; its variety and condensation, and directness, and superhuman power, is its capability of perversion and misinterpretation by men of an evil spirit. To make, therefore, a professed reception of the Bible, the term of communion, is to leave the door open for the widest and wildest extremes of opinion; it would throw the vital bond of a Christian Church around those whose views, and sympathies, and feelings on the most fundamental of all questions, as experience has long since demonstrated, might be in direct opposition; it would sweep together Hume and Wilberforce, Priestly and Payson, Pelagius and Augustine, Luther and Gregory, a heterogeneous mass of elements too hard to be moulded, too active to be restrained, too discordant for harmonious development or efficient co-operation.

If now the attempt should be made to avoid this difficulty, by recognizing only such as truly and fully received the Bible according to the most common-sense interpretation, yet this very attempt must be preceded by a settlement of the question: What is this common-sense interpretation? What does this book teach? In other words, by the formation of a creed. On the other hand, if Christian experience be constituted the term of Christian fellowship, yet the same difficulty meets us at the threshold; what constitutes Christian experience? What are its elements? By what is it measured, and how shall it be

tested? But this is to form a creed. Besides, Christian experience is but the counterpart of Christian doctrine; it is doctrine incarnated, living, acting. The heart is moulded by the truth. The views entertained by the subject of a Christian, or a purely worldly experience, will stamp themselves upon that experience. As the parent prints the lineaments of his face upon his offspring, so will they upon their offspring. What is thought of God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost—of sin and atonement, of justification, and works, and faith, and prayer, will as surely be revealed in the experience, as the character of the mould is declared by the casting. In these vital questions, God hath bound the intellect and the heart so closely together, that all who are born into his kingdom, are said to have been born again by the truth. The *word* occupies no subordinate position in the origin of the Christian life, and all true experience in a believer is, necessarily, the feeling which that truth, when received, has wrought in the soul. It follows, therefore, that, in order to the perfect organization of a Christian Church, the terms of communion, involving the fundamental principles of the Gospel received into the intellect, and, as far as man can judge, into the heart, will first be settled. And be the expression of this longer or shorter, written or understood, it will constitute a *creed, or confession of their faith*.\*

This congregation of believers have now attained the terms of communion. But meeting in mass, they are without officers, without an executive or administrative organization. They have, as yet, no government. They are all equal in right, in privilege, in obligation. They are agreed as to what they *believe*; but not as to what

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\* Rom. xvi. 17. Gal. i. 7. Matt. xxiv. 4, 5.

they will *do*; nor as to the manner in which they shall seek to realize the purposes for which they assemble. They have only determined *who* shall be permitted to belong to their communion; *how* that communion will best be preserved and promoted, is yet unsettled. No sooner do they meet for worship, than difficulties arise, wants reveal themselves. Are all to pray? Can all teach? Are all obligated to administer the ordinances? Such an assembly is a mob, without "decency," and without "order." It is found essential to their edification, to appoint officers; to set apart some to special duties, clothe them with special privileges and powers; in short, to organize a government, and frame the regimen of public worship. In doing this, it is found necessary, in the first place, that some one should be set apart to lead in the devotions of the assembly, and stand responsible for its order and wise conduct. It is necessary that some one should administer the sacraments in an orderly and impressive manner; that there should be some one, of sufficient wisdom and knowledge of the word, to visit the sick and the dying, and exercise a care for all the congregation. The Bible being such a book as it is, so full, so rich, so various, written originally in other, and those dead languages, in another land, colored by customs, and manners, and scenes foreign to most of the world, and replete with profound doctrines, remote from the popular apprehension: the mind of man being what it is, so easily blinded to the truth; and the life of man being so full of care and business of time, rendering it needful that clear and stirring views of truth should often be presented to it; and more than all, the world being indifferent or hostile, and demanding that the principles of the Gospel should be clearly unfolded, proved, defended

against objections, and urged home upon the souls of men, to win them to Christ; these things being so, it is found necessary that some one should be set apart to the special work of preaching the Gospel, of defending its doctrines, and presenting its various truths according to the wants and circumstances of the congregation. As these duties are of the most difficult character, as they demand study and time, and learning, tasking the highest powers of the intellect, so a person must be selected, best qualified for such a work, by the ripeness of his mental powers, and especially by that spiritual discipline, through which the grace of God most manifestly sets men apart for these high duties. As the position is one of great responsibility, so it should be clothed with great dignity; as it is one of continued labor, of the incessant devotion of all the powers of the man, to the spiritual interests and eternal well-being of the Church and world, so its incumbent, lifted above all anxiety about temporal wants, should be upheld by an ample and generous support. Hence springs the ministry of reconciliation and edification. It belongs to the fallen and impure state of man, and the imperfect condition of the Church. It rises naturally out of those very necessities which originally constrained the union of the people of God in religious assemblies. In the form in which it now exists, it is peculiar to Christianity. Neither Paganism, Judaism nor Mohamedanism brought forth the simple and original idea of a Christian ministry—a ministry, “not appointed like the priests of Pagan antiquity, for the performance of ceremonies, but for the inculcation of truth; not to conduct the pomp of lustrations and sacrifices, but *to watch for souls, as they that must give account.*” It arises out of the simple structure of Christ-



ianity itself, seeking by the power of truth, to impress the reason, quicken the conscience, and purify the heart; out of the divine purpose to bring religion home to the bosoms of men, through the frequent unfolding of the truth by human lips, rather than by an impressive and a formal ceremonial. The design of God, and the intent of the Saviour thus harmonize with our necessities. The same causes which impel a Christian people to unite at all, will oblige them to go farther, to institute and maintain for the more perfect accomplishment of all the great objects of their association, the ministry of the Gospel.\*

Having thus elected and set apart one to act as their minister, pastor, or bishop, they have next to determine the order of public worship. In doing this, they would naturally be guided by three principles. They will seek a style of worship in harmony with the simplicity of the Christian dispensation—best adapted to promote the purest spirituality, and bring the heart most directly into contact with God—and one that will most fully meet the varying wants of a congregation.

First, it will be their aim to arrange their worship in harmony with the simplicity of Christianity. The age of rites, and types, and impressive ceremonial, was closed by the advent of Christ. The temple, with its elaborate arrangements and successive passages of deepening solemnity, from the court of the Gentiles to the holiest of holies; the altar, with its round of sacrifices, its lustrations, and incense, and blood; the priests, with their distinctive and gorgeous vestments; and the Levites, with their various service, all passed away when *He* appeared.

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\* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Acts xx. 28. Jer. iii. 15. 1 Pet. v. 2, 4. 1 Cor. iv. 1. 2 Cor. iii. 6.

There was a propriety in this splendid and diversified regimen of God's house, at the time of its institution. The holding up on high the mighty fact of atonement by blood, as yet revealed only in prophesy, and, therefore, easy to be misapprehended and lost; the gathering together of Israel around the altar, for the express purpose of isolating them from all other nations, as the matrix in which the Christian Church was to be formed for its glorious birth—these are considerations that obviously justify the ecclesiastical constitution of Moses. But when Jesus came, these reasons existed no longer. The cross was planted, the gospel written, and the truth of redemption was set up in history, amid the most stupendous transactions of human and divine power, where the world could not help see it through all future time. That which rites and types once taught, now was proclaimed by apostles and ministers, and unfolded in the New Testament; no longer isolated in Judea, it was prepared and destined to speak to the heart of universal man. That which once bore the stamp of a divinely impressed propriety, in this new and simple dispensation, where circumcision availeth nothing, and Moses gives place to Jesus, bears upon its front the impress of an obvious impropriety—as a reversal of the intent of God—an attempt to cast the swathing bands of infancy around the expanding form of youth, and dwarf the stature of the soul into the diminutiveness of a perpetual childhood.

In harmony with this sweeping away of the old, the formal, the typical, the ritual, the intricate, the outwardly splendid; in harmony with the rent veil, and the openness of the divine revelation, and the directness of its appeals, and the entire simplicity of the new dispensation, this

congregation of believers will have as little of art and form about their worship as is consistent with a just order, variety, and uniformity. The preaching of the Gospel, the reading of the holy Scriptures, the offering of prayer, and the singing of psalms and hymns, constituting the elements of public worship, will follow each other according to the simplest arrangement, so as to relieve alike both pastor and people from undue fatigue, and secure the utmost depth and unity of impression. They will not seek to work these things together as a piece of art, an elaborate Mosaic service, in which the hand of invention shall be perpetually visible; to understand which, requires study and practice; involving a long-drawn succession of changes of posture, of erections and prostrations, of addresses and responses, so complicated as to demand a directory, and bewilder even the intelligent stranger, who, for the first time, witnesses it, and lead him to imagine himself in the presence of some pantomimic representation. They will seek rather to have the number of changes, in their service, as few as is consistent with a just variety, and so open and simple in their order, as to commend themselves to the piety and intelligence of all the followers of Jesus. They will not clothe their ministers in priestly vestments, bringing back into Christian assemblies the Mosaic idea of a formal and outward holiness, in opposition to the New Testament idea, that all Christians are now a royal priesthood,\* and attracting to the mere man that attention which should be given to the *truth*. Standing upon the higher platform of this Christian dispensation, they will conform the style of their worship to its noble simplicity.

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\* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

Second, they will seek a kind of service best adapted to promote the highest spirituality of mind, and bring the heart into the most intelligent communion with God. In the service of the sanctuary, there are two principal objects. The first is instruction, the second, the awakening and expression of devotion; the first involves the communication of just views of the divine character, and our relations and duties; the second, the expression of our affections, and the training of the heart to intimate and direct communion with the Redeemer. The first is essential to the second; it is the foundation for the edifice, it is the condition indispensable to all true devotion. Correct views must precede correct emotions; and the soul can never grow in grace save as it grows in the knowledge of Christ. Ignorance is the mother of vice, and can never be associated as an ally in man's spiritual progress. The very illuminations of the divine spirit honor the truth, by being always associated with it.

It is the glory of this Christian dispensation, that the *Gospel is preached*; that the priesthood and the rite-performer have given place to the ministry of reconciliation—sent forth primarily not to baptize,\* but to preach the word of life in season and out of season, reproving, exhorting, instructing, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. A Christian Church will have a care, therefore, that, in the ordering of their public worship, they give the chief place to the preaching of the truth; that they put foremost that which Jesus and his apostles have placed foremost; that they adopt no ritual by which this noblest, this most characteristic power of

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\* 1 Cor. i. 17.

the Christian dispensation, is prevented from having its fullest development, and putting forth its highest energy. The faithful preaching of the word, more than all things else, is connected with the spirituality of the Church; and no matter how orthodox and correct may be the other parts of the divine service, yet, if this be absent, or if it be degraded to an incidental and an inferior position, or if the *pulpit* contradict the *desk*, and that which is the expression of devotion find nothing in the instructions of the sanctuary by which it may gain new life and strength then piety will decline, and the form of religion will alone remain, as the shell within which the kernel is withered.

But when they have made thus prominent the preaching of the word, it will be necessary for them to determine in what manner the other parts of divine service, especially that of prayer, shall be conducted. Here, in these last days, two ways present themselves. The one is the printed form; the other, the spontaneous offering of the heart, guided by the intellect, and receiving its shape in the utterance of the minister. The first selects the prayers of good men, and repeats them, without variation, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from year to year. The second supposes that the pastor, if he have intelligence and piety enough to *preach*, ought to have enough to lead the devotions of the people in *prayer*.

Without entering into a protracted discussion of this subject, it will be sufficient, for my present purpose, to present a single train of thought. True prayer, let it be borne in mind, is the most intimate, direct, and unveiled communion with God. It is most perfect when the heart is brought most immediately into the presence of God, is most entirely isolated from all things else, and is most

fully absorbed in directly addressing Jehovah. Supposing always that the views of the worshipper respecting the being worshipped are correct, prayer involves a direct application to an invisible Jehovah, a summoning of the whole man to the most abstract and spiritual of all works, a retirement from the world of sense to the world of spirit, a bringing up from the depths of the soul, all its wants and all its emotions, and a spreading them forth before the eye of an omniscient and an ever-present Lord. And that mode of prayer will demonstrably be the best, which most effectually accomplishes these objects; not that which produces a vague present impression, not that which most easily seizes hold of the senses, not that which does away with the necessity for a personal application of the mind and heart to the work before it; but that which shuts up the man to this one business, which compels isolation from worldly objects, and casts out worldly thoughts, which obliges the *heart* and *mind* to engage in it, which most effectually *trains* them for this highest and purest work of an intelligent spirit.

To effect this training, and accustom the spirit to rise, as on eagle's wings, heavenward, and hold most intimate converse with Jehovah, and open to him all the inmost man, we are well assured, from a wide and protracted experience of the Church in different ages, the habit of extempore prayer is greatly more powerful than the constant use of a printed form. In the former case, the eyes are closed to all external objects of attraction, and the mind stimulated to apply itself exclusively to the one great business of supplication. And though, at the first, as a child, learning to walk, will have many a fall, the Christian will find the law of mental association exposes

him to the intrusion of unwelcome and diverting thoughts ; yet, as he carries forward this spiritual discipline, he will attain a more perfect command of his intellect, and an ability to abstract himself from all earthly concerns. There is, in this habit of extempore prayer, a far greater power of isolation—of gathering about the soul, in the midst of a multitude, the conscious presence of Jehovah, and the awful realities of another world, than can be attained in any other way. With but one sense open to the world, and that fully occupied with the voice of prayer, the suppliant follows the general course of the petition, rising with it, adding to it, and applying it to his own case, as his feelings and conscious wants dictate. If new emotions rise, if new objects present themselves, he learns how to incorporate them into the more public supplications, and bear them before the mercy-seat in the chariot of his mute petition. Quickened by the living voice, uttering the spontaneous emotions of the heart, in language shaped by feeling, and penetrated with it to an extent rarely attained in the use of a stereotyped form, he pours forth the fullness of his own heart. He prays as did Paul on the sea and amid the tempest, as did Christ in Gethsemane, as, without a question, did the whole company of apostles and early Christians ; in secret, he presents his own petitions as they rise in his soul ; in public, he uses the prayer and voice of the pastor as an assistant and guide, but not as a substitute.

When, however, we use a *form*, and that is repeated by many voices, and is also broken up, so as to involve frequent changes of posture, then we multiply the sources of distraction ; we open the eyes to read, the most unnatural mode of prayer, giving the world another inlet

to the soul; we bring a work of art between us and God; we accustom ourselves to *lean* on it. It is ultimately far more difficult for the soul to isolate itself, and hold perfect spiritual communion with the Invisible, than when the senses are closed to all without, and spirit with spirit holds its unseen and silent converse. The form aggravates the tendency, always strong in the human heart, to descend from the spiritual to the formal. Nothing can permanently hold back the spirit from this degeneracy, aside from the influence of the Holy Ghost, so well as the inwrought habit of spiritual, and isolated, and extempore prayer.

To the correctness of this reasoning, the world often bears its unwilling testimony. In the formal style of worship, we see men of earth joining as if they rendered an acceptable service; while, in the other, they find brought home to them a spirituality to which they are conscious of being strangers, and with which they surely have no sympathy. It is a work too high, too spiritual, to isolate themselves for the direct work of prayer, and bring their spirits individually to the throne of grace. It offends them not to join with a multitude of voices in the responses of a Liturgy, since this obliges them to undertake no work of personal communion with Jehovah, and permits them readily to sink their individual responsibility in the general excitement and distracting influence of the multitude. And thus, however admirably a Liturgy may be arranged, and however beautiful and truly excellent may be its parts, and however it may assist the devotions of some who are already spiritual; yet, as a means of training men to appreciate the worship of the heart rather than of the lips, of forcing home upon the unregenerate their lost and



irreligious condition, of imparting to Christians the power of abstraction from the world, and command over their own thoughts, and the most entire isolation of the soul, it is not to be compared with the more natural and simple method of extempore prayer.

Third, in arranging their mode of divine service, they will make it such as will best adapt it to the varying wants of a congregation. They will not predetermine just what hymns shall be sung, what portions of Scripture shall be read, or what objects shall alone be presented in prayer. To do this, is to destroy one object in having a pastor; it is to reduce him, so far as these services are concerned, to a mere reading machinè; it is to take away all judgment, and consideration, and will on these points, and oblige him to follow an iron rule, fixed with no reference to the particular condition of the congregation; it derogates from the high idea of an apostolic pastor—of one who, from his own knowledge of the flock, is best prepared to select subjects of discourse adapted to their state, portions of the word, hymns, and psalms, corresponding therewith, while he so shapes his prayers as to bring into view the different and peculiar circumstances of his charge. In public prayer, as in the preaching of the word, there are some subjects always appropriate, yet there is a wide range of other subjects, which demand either attention, or greater or less prominence, according to the varying circumstances of the congregation. There are times of sorrow and of joy, times of worldliness and of deep solemnity, of health and wide-spread sickness, of peace and war, which, as they occur, should receive a special attention, and modify the services of God's house.

In arranging their mode of worship, that it may most

effectually accomplish the object of its institution, this Christian Church will not prescribe for the pastor such an order of things as to forestall his judgment, and prevent him from selecting the means best adapted to render his preaching effectual, and the service in harmony with the condition of the people. Influenced by these and kindred reasons, seeing that, with some temporary advantages, an elaborate Liturgy has so many disadvantages, and so strong a tendency to formalism—they reject it, and choose the simpler form and order of the primitive Church.

In the beginning of such a Church, it is obvious, that an involved and artistically wrought service is unnatural and inappropriate. Guided by the dictates of a pure and simple Christianity, not yet aspiring to the inventions of the theater, and the contrivances of art, they will adopt the more unartificial and obvious arrangements of the divine service. Having one abundantly able to lead their devotions, and preach the word of God, they feel not the want of the prayers or discourses of other men, however wise, and good, and distinguished they may have been.\*

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\* In these remarks it is the author's design, briefly to justify our own preference for the simple form of worship, characteristic of our Church, in common with most of the other evangelical Churches. It is, however, a matter worthy of the serious reflection of those excellent men in the Episcopal Church, who mourn over the prevalence of a semi-Papacy in large portions of the Church, of their honest preference and filial love, whether the tendency thus manifested to adopt the spirit, and often the form, of Popery, is not due, in part, to the *Liturgical* training of the people, as well as to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, in the Prayer-book; whether, had England adopted the simpler form, we should have seen, in the very face of the Reformation, and to the scandal of our common Protestantism, such a return to the practices of the Mother of Abominations; whether, in short, the Liturgy does not train

We have now traced the progress of this company of believers, in the organization of a visible Church, until we find them possessed of a creed, a pastor, and a definite order of divine worship. But as they increase, the necessities of their condition will oblige the creation of other offices. The time will come, when a house of worship must be erected, and the secular concerns of the Church will demand the special attention of individuals qualified to manage them. Provision must be made for the administration of the ordinances and the temporal support of the pastor. Meanwhile, as numbers increase, there will rise up within the Church itself, those who stand in need of its support and guidance; those whom sickness, and bereavement, and the reverses of business, have deprived of the ability to sustain themselves; widows and orphans, to be nourished with fraternal tenderness, and guided with parental wisdom, and cared for as members of the body of Christ.

To attend to all these interests systematically and thoroughly; to deliver the pastor from the weight of secular concerns, and the Church from the odium of not caring for her own membership, it is found necessary to choose good and able men, accustomed to such things, to act for the Church as its stewards, to collect and disburse the offerings of the people, and maintain thus a system of relief and support, befitting brethren bound to bear each other's burdens, and look not on their own things alone,

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the people to a style of worship which prepares many minds for the ascendancy of Popery itself. It is not in the spirit of controversy, but as a subject worthy at least of examination by the friends of the Redeemer in that branch of the Church of Christ, that this suggestion is made.

but on those of others. Thus will the order of *Deacons*, or secular ministers, arise—an order not instituted to preach, nor to be a stepping-stone to the pastoral office; not an order of mere licentiates, the heirs-expectant of a priestly office, or a prelate's seat—but an exclusively secular order, elected and instituted to manage finances, and care for widows and orphans, and minister to the poor, and supply for the Church that department of its internal police, without which it would be obviously defective, but with which it becomes the most efficient organization in the world, for the relief of the distressed, and the elevation of the poor.\*

If, now, we could suppose this company of professed disciples to be, in the main, perfect in the exercise of Christian feeling, and the exhibition of Christian character, we might leave them to live and grow, and spread abroad their influence in the world. But, instead of this, it is a confessed fact, that these men are *all* imperfect; that some of them, in all probability, are not at heart true disciples; that no external organization can wholly prevent the occurrence of offenses against the purity of the Church, and the law of Christ. Amid the temptations of the world, and the still unvanquished corruptions that cling to our fallen nature, the professed Christian lives; and it will not be strange, if occasionally not only the bounds of Christian propriety, but the clear and stern commands of Jesus, should be overleaped. But when the offense arises; when the law that upholds the purity and life of the Church is broken; when the name of Jesus is openly dishonored by his avowed disciples, a question at once arises, most ser-

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\* Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 13-15; Acts vi. 1-6.

ious in its character, and large in its influence for good or evil, as it is answered.

Not to regard the offense at all, to neglect all discipline, is to throw down the walls of the visible Church, to make the outward and formal body of Christ the abode of demons; and as men are greatly influenced by that which is visible—by the sight of a visibly pure Church—to recognize the reality of religion, so, to destroy that visibility, is, with the multitude, to destroy religion, and nullify one of the strongest influences for the conversion of men. How, then, and by whom, shall discipline be conducted, and the offender tried? Shall the *pastor* be judge and jury? But this is to make the ministry a despotism, and the minister a despot; it is to intrust a power to an individual, which he is very liable to abuse. All power is open to abuse; but the experience of the world has shown that, in these cases of public concern, there is a peculiar liability to such abuse, when it is centered in a single individual. Besides, the offense may respect the pastor himself, or those for whom he feels a special sympathy; so that he is apparently incapacitated, by his position and relations, from sitting as sole judge in the case. For, however honest and upright he may be, yet, sharing in the imperfection of all Christians, he is, like them, not insensible to temptation, nor above all unhappy bias. Theoretically, there is no more beautiful system of law than that which combines all the attributes of sovereignty in the single man; but in this world, and among the imperfect, none has proved more thoroughly opposite to the highest welfare of the race.

Shall, then, the members of the Church, in full assembly, resolve themselves into a court, and administer dis-

cipline? To this there are strong objections. If the one man is liable to be swayed by feeling, and blinded by prejudice, this is equally true of a multitude. A popular assembly, unaccustomed to judge of evidence, impatient of that slow and careful process, indispensable oftentimes to the full elucidation of the facts, is, besides, peculiarly susceptible to false impressions from the plausible and ingenious advocate, and greatly exposed to be swayed by impulse and momentary feeling. Not unfrequently, the process of a public trial before such a court engenders deep and lasting divisions, arrays the members of it in a partisan struggle, and breathes into them a spirit of strife infinitely worse than the original offense. There are cases where it is essential to the interests of justice and righteousness, that long, minute, and painful examinations should be gone through; where many witnesses must be examined, and the law of evidence studied and applied most carefully, before a just conclusion can be reached. There are cases involving scenes wholly *unfit* for a public investigation, on which none but those who are compelled, by duty, should attempt to look. As a trial proceeds before a popular assembly, if it be much protracted, it will often happen, that all can not be present through its continuance, and the question may come at last to be decided by many who have heard only a portion of the evidence, or by a part only of the body.

Now, when you consider that a true Church of Christ will embrace minds of every variety of intelligence, here and there one admirably prepared to grapple with the difficulties of discipline, while the mass, by their previous pursuits, are unfitted for this important work; when you consider the ease with which a popular body may be swayed,

and its passions appealed to, and decisions the most unjust attained; when you see how easily the most trifling offense may give rise to parties, and destroy the peace of the Church; when you know how difficult it is to bring a large number of persons, engaged in their own pressing pursuits, to give the time and attention necessary to master a difficult case; when you are sure that some of these offenses are of a nature, the details of which it is a temptation and a shame to spread before a public assembly—when you consider all these aspects of a purely congregational discipline, you will not wonder if this Church of which we are speaking, should seek for some other mode of trying offenses, and securing general purity and order. She might be told, indeed, that her members must be supposed to be honest, though imperfect; that, by this process, they would be trained to intelligent action, and a just judgment. In answer, she might say, “The very necessity of discipline, shows our liability not only to err, but to sin; while our honesty of purpose does not secure us either the requisite intelligence, the freedom from the impulses of passion, or insensibility to the sight of corruption; while, as a Church, we are in a state too variable, and the responsibility is too generally diffused, ever to lead us to indulge the utopian anticipation of seeing the multitude fully qualified for such a work as this.”

Wherever true freedom has advanced in the world, it has fled alike from the despot and the town-meeting, as judge and jury; it has created, as its chief triumph, and mightiest bulwark of human rights, a tribunal combining the intelligent understanding of law, the practical sense that judges of matters of fact, with as much cool independence and impartiality of feeling, as can well be at-

tained by any system which fallible men are to work. That tribunal, in all states where true freedom exists, is not the public assembly, however it may be distinguished for honesty and patriotism; it is not the *single* judge or the solitary monarch, however incorruptible and wise he may be supposed to be. It is the judge and the selected jury, set apart for a special work, sworn to administer the law and judge of the evidence, according to truth and righteousness. This tribunal combines the highest qualities for the best administration of justice. It is the result of the experience of ages; is the noblest jewel, wrenched from the hand of absolute power, and set in the coronal of freedom. Yea, it is more than a jewel, an ornament of splendor; it is the strongest barrier against the encroachments of the sovereign of the one side, and the licentiousness of the popular assembly on the other; against the intolerance, and the ambition, and the pride of the first, and the prejudice, and passion, and haste of the second.

Now, the body of brethren before us, see open to them one of three courses. They may retain all discipline in their own hands, or commit it to the pastor, or select a few of their own number, known to be intelligent, devoted, impartial, and active, who, in conjunction with the pastor as their chairman, shall be solemnly bound to administer it according to the rules which the Church shall adopt—rules framed to secure the rights of individuals, and guard against oppression. Aside from the difficulties attending the first two methods of discipline, they find in this third body a tribunal, approved by the experience of ages; by which, without noise, or confusion, or party strife, the necessary arrangements can readily be made, and the case patiently tried. They know that men thus selected will usually be



less subject to the impulses of passion and sympathy than a popular assembly; that they will become accustomed to judge of evidence, and acquire a facility in the dispatch of business; that, as it is their appropriate business, they will be far more likely to see that discipline is duly administered, than when it is left to every member of the Church; that they can more easily heal difficulties in their origin, and bring back the wandering, by the very quietness with which they proceed; that they will be able to conduct trials, which, if made public, would contaminate rather than purify, in a manner to save the Church from an offense greater than the original; that they can give a more patient and protracted attention to difficult cases, demanding nice discrimination and a knowledge of the law of evidence, than could possibly be given in a crowd of Church members. Moreover, they know that a popular assembly is only in a loose sense a government, and that all such bodies must, in any case, provide executive officers, who shall prepare the business, and afterward supervise the execution of their decrees. It is a matter of fact that, when the discipline is retained in such an assembly, yet to render it effectual, the principal part of it is often delegated to individuals and committees, selected for the purpose.

With these views, they resolve to elect a board of Elders for the administration of discipline and government, as the tribunal, above all others, most conservative of their liberties, and best adapted to promote the peace and prosperity of the Church. In this body, the pastor sits simply as moderator and expounder of the law, on a perfect equality, in respect to discipline, with all the other members—all are overseers, bishops, presbyters, elders; combining the intelligence of the ministry with the intelligence and prac-

tical tact and general knowledge of the laity. To this body the Church commits not only the general discipline of the house of God, but the admission of new members, and all such other matters as to them may seem best. In the absence of the pastor, it is usually incumbent on them to see that his place is properly filled, by appointing either one of their own number, or some other person, to that duty.\* In this manner, the general arrangements for worship and discipline are most effectually secured; and we see the visible Church rising before us in the order and harmony of the human form, with an erect and healthful trunk, and limbs to execute its purposes, while Christ is its glorious head. It is neither body alone, nor feet, nor hands alone; but, by the proper casting of parts and division of offices, every member hath some special work assigned him, in the performance of which, the whole body maketh increase unto the edifying itself in all christian graces. Here is a company of believers, who thus, advancing step by step in the path of mutual edification, at length perfect their organization, with direct reference to their felt wants, and stand forth, before the world, a full-grown church of Christ.

We have thus seen the rise of a single Church. We view it attaining as complete an organization for the great purposes designed, as could well be, while standing by itself. We are now to take it out of this isolation, and introduce it to other Churches which, in like manner, have sprung up around it. Now, very much the same causes which operated to form a single Church, will impel these Churches, as their numbers multiply, to unite for the

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\*1 Tim. v. 17; Acts. xv. 25, xx. 28; Rom. xii. 7, 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Thess. v. 12.

accomplishment of certain objects, and the prevention of certain evils, for which, while independent, they are not fully adequate. The presence of other Churches alters the position of the Church whose progress we have thus far traced, and obliges it to determine in what way they are to be treated. As yet, they are comparatively ignorant of each other; they feel, however, a common want—the want of general fellowship and combination against the world; they feel that, in the operation of their independent organizations, there are some evils and defects, which a more general union might remove or supply. Impelled by these views, the Churches within a convenient distance agree to a mutual conference for the adjustment of some plan, by which, while their individual efficiency is promoted, they may be able unitedly to accomplish what surpasses their individual capacity. By chosen delegates, they meet together. The *first* great principle which they adopt is that which lies at the basis of all constitutional freedom, the principle of representation. Instead of having an association of pastors alone, to devise and act for the Churches, they resolve that it is important the *Churches* should be associated as well as the pastors; and to secure this object, that every church shall be entitled to send a representative to the contemplated body. While the pastor may have *his* seat, the Church, through her representative, must also have *her* seat. If measures are to be adopted, and plans laid, that are to affect the interests of all the Churches; if a union is to be formed, available for the purposes desired; if it is to be anything more than a loose, irresponsible body, without efficiency, and without consideration, then is it a fundamental principle that each Church, however few in number or weak in influence, shall

not only have her pastor present, but also her elder, through whom she may speak ; by whom her rights may be maintained, her interests promoted, and her views declared. This principle is fundamental to christian liberty in ecclesiastical organizations. Neither the ministry alone nor the laity alone can form the ablest, freest, and most efficient organization. There is in the ministry often a tendency to dogmatism, and in the laity, sometimes, an equally strong disposition toward the opposite extreme. The union of the two in an ecclesiastical body combines the elements of a healthy progress and a stable union. The two modify each other, and minister to the strength of the whole fabric, and adapt it more perfectly to its noble purpose.

Having thus, by a simple rule, settled the composition of the body that is to serve as their bond of union, they proceed to define its functions and powers. First, each of these Churches has a distinct creed of its own. But, in order to harmonious action, it is essential that there should be entire confidence in the rectitude of each other's religious views. The same necessity which compels the adoption of a creed in the individual Church, operates here with equal force. They agree, therefore, upon the terms of communion, they adopt the same general confession of faith. This at once creates uniformity of belief throughout the entire circle of associated Churches. Members may pass from one to the other, without hesitation ; and the fellowship of a christian household be felt and cherished by all. As these Churches, when isolated, are liable to suffer from the efforts of crafty and designing men, who privily would bring in damnable heresies, lead astray the weak, and cause multitudes to swerve from

the faith, so, to assist them in resisting such efforts, these Churches grant to their own representatives, in presbytery assembled, a supervisory power—a right to inspect their state, and admonish them of the wrong, and correct such evils of this kind as may exist. They do not in this create a tyranny, but a legitimate government, in which they are all represented, in which the finest elements of freedom are happily combined. They unite in presenting a broader front to the advances of error, and repelling those who seek to destroy their original terms of communion, and so turn them from the faith.

Second, it is found that their mode of ordaining the ministry of the Gospel, however legitimate in itself, is yet connected with many and great inconveniences. Ordination is the recognition of certain qualifications, given by Christ for the ministry, and the solemn setting apart of an individual thus gifted to that high office. It has in it no “opus operatum”—it does not bestow the grace and sanctity necessary to the discharge of this office; it recognizes them as already, in a good measure, possessed; it beholds a man whom *Christ* has set apart to the ministry, and it gives the sanction of the ordaining power to the exercise of these ministerial gifts, in all the appropriate duties of this great work. Now, it is obvious that, while a Church may ordain a man for itself, and recognize him as a minister of Christ, and clothe him with authority for that purpose, so far as *she* is concerned, yet the validity and authority of his ordination, beyond her pale, will be in exact proportion to the estimate in which she is held as a Church, and to the qualifications which manifestly exist in the person she has set apart to the work of the ministry. In other words, it is only so far as *her* authori-

ty to ordain is recognized, that such an ordination will be respected and held as valid. But the independent Church is, perhaps, weak and small, composed of those who are not particularly qualified to pronounce upon the qualifications of a candidate for the ministry. Unaccustomed to the work, and with no special or known qualifications for it, she selects the future preacher of the Gospel, and ordains him to that office, and sends him forth to preach. Now, who is to recognize this man as a minister, beyond the Church that has commissioned him? Of this Church little has gone abroad, and what is known is far from inspiring confidence in any ordination of her's. It follows, therefore, that out of her bounds her regularly ordained minister derives no authority from his ordination, ceases to be regarded as a minister, just as truly as a Presbyterian or an Episcopal bishop is not recognized as such in the Vatican. His influence is, consequently, limited; and it may be long before he will be able, amid such disheartening circumstances, to commend himself to the Church at large, by the actual demonstration of the existence in him of the sterling qualifications of a minister of Christ. Besides, an individual Church, in addition to her want of a wide-spread influence and a power to commend her ordinations to those without her limits, may not find among her own number one whom she thinks really called of God to this ministry; while another Church may have a dozen endowed pre-eminently with all the gifts and graces essential to this high office. It is, therefore, exceedingly desirable that the authority to ordain ministers of the Gospel should be vested in a body of such character and influence, and in such relation to a considerable body of Churches, as will enable them to select the

most suitable candidates, and cause their ordination to be generally recognized and respected among them and the world. For this purpose, it is determined that this representative body of their pastors and elders shall take upon themselves the responsibility of selecting and licensing such men as, in their judgment, possess the chief qualifications for the work of the ministry. But in order to secure the judgment of the Church at large upon their qualifications, except in rare cases, they are not at once ordained. They are sent forth to preach as probationers, to be proved in the pulpit, to be tested in the actual work of the ministry; and when the Churches have borne their testimony to the fitness of these candidates for this office, or when individual Churches shall desire their services, they are then solemnly ordained as ministers of the Gospel. But should it be ascertained that, through infirmities of spirit, or great deficiency in ministerial gifts, they were not acceptable to the people, and not adapted to be useful in that sphere of labor, then their licensure is recalled, and they fall back into another department of Christian duty. In this manner, these confederated Churches propose to secure for themselves an able, devoted and successful ministry—a ministry that shall bear the commendation of their united wisdom, and command the recognition and respect of those who are without. Meanwhile, as learning is to be associated with piety, in order to prepare men most successfully to preach the word of life, they avail themselves of their united strength, to establish academies, colleges, and seminaries of theological science. Associated, they thus effect what is beyond the power of isolated Churches, and see rising among them a ministry, resplendent in its learning and ripe in

piety, useful at home, respected abroad, and prepared to extend the religion of Jesus into the distant and dark places of the earth.\*

Having thus provided for the increase, the ordination, and perpetuity of the ministry, these Churches proceed to consider the subject of a mutual discipline. They lay down, as fundamental to their union, these two principles: First, that every member of their body, be he minister, elder, deacon, or private Christian, shall be accounted innocent, until he is proved guilty, and never be cut off from his connection with the Church, *except after a fair trial*. Second, that in order to secure such a trial, all proper means of defense shall be allowed, and the case conducted according to known rules, designed to secure the unfolding of the truth in the fullest manner. These principles underlie all their disciplinary arrangements; they are the foundations for the strongest ramparts around individual right and liberty—foundations such as the freest civil governments have laid, on which to erect the noble fabric of political freedom. In order to give the fullest effect to these principles, this confederated Church, jealous of power, knowing that the best men may err, and the coolest sometimes be partial, resolve that, if any of her members feel aggrieved by the decision of a session; if he feels that, through ignorance, or partiality, or mistake, he has been unjustly dealt with, then he may enjoy the privilege of appeal to this representative body of ministers and elders, in presbytery assembled, for a review of his case. Nay, so large and full is this liberty, so solicitous is she that none of her children may wrongfully

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\* 1 Tim. iv. 14; Acts xv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 22.



suffer, that she permits a second and a third appeal from the judgment of a local body to a larger gathering of representatives, convened in synod or assembly. But while she concedes to him this privilege, for the more perfect attainment of justice, she declares that he shall be solemnly bound by the final decision—that he shall not put his brethren to the trouble of giving him a full and impartial trial, and then treat the decision as mere advice, and so make a farce of ecclesiastical discipline before the world. In this way, the privilege of appeal from acts of prejudice, or passion, or mistake, is granted in the Church, as well as in the state; and a person is not compelled to suffer wrong through the unhappy decision of a single Church, or pastor, or session.\* He may carry his cause from this lower tribunal before his brethren at large, who,

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\* We once heard an esteemed clergyman publicly argue in favor of discipline by single Churches, because, “when a thing was done, then it was done”—an argument as strong in favor of despotism as the Neros and Napoleons of absolute monarchy could desire. This very fact, that when discipline is thus *done*, there is no retreat for injured innocence, no appeal to a less prejudiced tribunal, from the acts of haste, or passion, or ignorance, is the strong argument alike against the decisions of a judge Lynch or a judge Nero, of an assembled multitude or a single man. A despotism, whether of the king or the people, is the simplest government in the world. Liberty seeks for checks and balances, for the machinery of courts, and forms, and rules, and appeals—for the utmost license of investigation and review, and argument, that at length the right may stand forth in the clear sunshine, and the wrong may reveal its hideous features. And though, at times, ingenious wickedness may double and twist, and seek to escape through these salutary forms, yet, in the main, true freedom is maintained, and innocence vindicated, and crime punished. It is the glory of Presbyterianism that it not only gives an accused member a trial, but that, by a most admirable set of rules, it seeks to make that a *fair* trial; and then, by the right of appeal, it multiplies the means for vindicating the right, and securing the innocent against all wrong.

removed from the scene, may investigate it with all the coolness of an unbiased judgment, and decide it in circumstances as favorable for the attainment of justice as ever exist in this world.

In like manner, should a pastor ever be chargeable with crime, or difficulties of a serious character arise between him and the Church of which he has charge, then is it part of the same general policy, that he shall be tried, or the causes of trouble investigated, not by the Church itself, nor by the session, who, from their relation to him, may be in a position the least favorable for a correct decision; but by the body that holds the ordaining power by the Churches in their associated capacity, by the presbytery of which he is a member. According to that old and just maxim of common-law, he is to be judged by his peers, and the same privilege of appeal granted, as his protection against an unjust and a hasty decision, which is given to the humblest member of the Church.

I have thus, in brief, reviewed some of the leading principles and modes of discipline, according to which these Christian societies seek to aid each other in maintaining, unimpaired, the faith and liberties of the household of faith. Thus associated together, they regard it as a binding duty they owe to each other and the world, by united efforts to spread the Gospel at home and abroad; to organize new Churches, and supply them, in their infancy, with the preaching of the word; to guard against the efforts of designing men, who seek to introduce among them turmoil and strife; to give the influence of their union to all wholesome reforms; and in all appropriate ways promote each other's peace, and build each other up in the faith, and love and practice of the religion of Jesus.

For such objects, these Churches agree to this intimate, fraternal, and apostolic plan of union. As independent states, each Church has its own rights, its own territory, its own government; as a federal union, they are so connected together as to form one larger state, united in its aims, its discipline, its influence, in opposition to all that is evil, and in favor of all that is good. They present to the world the vision of a true republican union, constituted not for the aggrandizement of the few, but solely for the edification and usefulness of the many, that thus we may more effectually realize the spirit of a Christian unity, and work at greater advantage in fulfilling the command of our ascended Master, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

Such, in its outlines, is the form of that Church under whose broad constitution it is our privilege to live, to constitute one of whose higher courts we are this day assembled. Behold, first, its order! See how, in this system, provision is most fully made for the regular and quiet progress of the people of God; for the orderly development of the Church, the ministrations and ordinances of the Gospel, the training up and ordination of an efficient ministry, the regular discipline of the house of the Lord, the planting of new Churches among the destitute, and the onward progress of a Christian people in all good works; how to each individual there may be some work assigned; and thus, as the several parts of the body, all work together in promoting one end.

God loves not confusion. "*Let all things be done decently, and in order,*" is a rule no less essential in the Church than in the family and the state. Behold, then, the order of our house! how beautiful! how appropriate! how simple, yet how comprehensive!

Second. Behold how admirably this system conserves religious liberty! It hath two great principles which are fundamental to the highest style of constitutional and republican freedom. 1. The principle of representation. All power goes up from the Churches. In hierarchical and other systems, hostile to liberty, the power descends from the ministry to the Churches. In ours it ascends. The Churches choose *all* their own officers, elect their own representatives, and have a voice in all laws and rules by which they are to be affected. The republican principle of representation prevails in the constitution of *all* our ecclesiastical bodies above the original ordinary Church meeting. 2. The principle, that every person is entitled to a fair trial according to the form of liberty which the Churches themselves have adopted. No man can rightly, or constitutionally, or legally be condemned and cast out until after a fair trial, in due form, before his peers, and after the full privilege of appeal has been allowed him, and all the means of a legitimate defense have been exhausted. The poorest and the lowliest member of this Church has here precisely the same rights with the most powerful. Be the offender a poor son of Africa, with the brand of centuries of oppression and degradation upon his body, he has a right to stand up here, with the descendent of princes, and enjoy the privilege of the same rules, and avail himself of the same bulwarks of defense, and call to his aid the same eloquence and force of argument granted to his more favored brothers. This strong refuge of liberty is inwrought into the constitution of our Church. Without it, liberty would be a name, not a fact, both in Church and state. These two principles of representation and trial by their own chosen jury, covering the rights of all our mem-

bership, form the abutments of our ecclesiastical system. Let either one be removed, and its integrity is destroyed; it remains one-sided, inconsistent, and unable to sustain the glorious arch of religious liberty. This is the finest discipline for the education of freemen. A true Presbyterian will never suffer himself to be defrauded of the rights of his manhood. He learns here the great principles of liberty; they have pervaded the Church and breathed around the fireside from his childhood. He has learnt to bow to no ecclesiastical despotism; he has learnt that neither priest nor monarch has a right to tyrannize over his conscience; that power comes immediately from the Church, and not from the officers of the Church alone; that it is not a company of pastors or deacons, or any mere officials, that constitute the Church, save as they may be selected to represent and maintain her interests, but that as the members of the body are essential to its perfectness, so the entire Church, in its most perfect state, embraces all the members of Christ's house with those whom they have set forth as their executives. Cherishing such views, they will not brook either ecclesiastical or civil despotism; they will go forth a noble army of confessors without the camp of the oppressor; and, as did Scotland's chosen hosts when they trod beneath their feet the jeweled coronet of Victoria as the emblem of a spiritual sovereignty, and disowned the authority of the state in the house of God as the lord of their conscience, so will their true brethren, the world over, while respecting authority in its legitimate sphere, and loyal as any others to the constitution and the law, resist an ecclesiastical or a civil dictatorship, and proclaim war against it as the enemy of God and man.

Third. Behold its efficiency! Its order and its freedom are not merely a theory. They do much to form the character for active labor, for large enterprise, for intelligent, steady progress. They ally it with all the elements of strength, and reform, and purity. The general order of the house of Christ is essential to the most effective working of its members. A system such as ours does not forestall individual action, and throw the labor which should be borne by many upon the shoulders of the few. Instead of this, while it secures general order, and provides specifically for more general wants, it yet leaves the mass free to operate in all the various modes open to them, and for which special gifts and graces may give them a peculiar fitness. It is no more essential to the development of the energy and life and greatest efficiency of a Church, that all its members should act as elders and governors, than that they should all be pastors and deacons; and the same argument which would commit the *discipline* of God's house to the entire body of the people, in order to oblige them to labor and increase their efficiency, and deepen their interest in the Church and its operations, would abolish the ministry of the deacon and the pastor, and so constitute the Church a body without limbs and executive powers. Aside from the work properly belonging to these officers, there is a wide field for individual action in the social meetings, in Sabbath schools and Bible classes, in direct efforts for the conversion of men, in the visiting of the distressed and the sick, and in all the various ways in which an active piety will seek to walk. The committing of the discipline of the Church to a board of elders is a great relief to the body of the Church from a business little adapted to promote their spirituality, and which, by

absorbing their time, diverts the mind and heart from other labors more directly connected with the upbuilding of the kingdom of Jesus. And thus they are left free to enter into the harvest as reapers, and stimulated to fill up their measure of labor for the ingathering of souls. There is in this our system as much of stimulus to individual labor, as much throwing the burden of responsibility for the onward progress of religion upon the entire membership, as wide an opening for such action as is best adapted to promote the spirituality of the Church and the salvation of men, as in any other known ecclesiastical constitution. All Churches, whatever be their general system of operation, are found practically to depend much, for their efficiency, upon the character of the pastor and other officers; but, setting aside this great element of power, we have yet to find the system that, *as a system*, combines more elements of real efficiency and power of orderly development, and liberty of profitable action and tendencies to build up the people in an intelligent, progressive piety, than our own.

Methodism owes its power, as a system, to its popular worship, free to the extremest license, and the stern discipline of its ministry—the principles of freedom and of despotism, both in excess, yet combining so as in a measure to balance each other. John Wesley was the most wonderful master of ecclesiastical strategy, Loyola not excepted, the world has ever seen. Confessedly, his was not the strategy of that elder John whom the Lord so loved. Yet, with all its antagonistic ultrasisms, and its commingling of opposites, I rejoice in the work which it has accomplished; and while I cannot regard it as the system which best suits the highest state of the Church, or which is best adapted

to build up the people in the intelligent understanding of God's word, and lift them to the noblest position in social life, I yet see before it a great work, and bid it God speed in its accomplishment. The prelatical and liturgical Churches owe their power, so far as the outward form is concerned, on the one hand, to the fiction of antiquity and official holiness, and apostolical authority; on the other, to their missals and liturgies, beautiful as mere works of art, but not full of the highest power to unfold the Christian life and promote the spiritual efficiency or the membership; the products not of apostolic simplicity, and spontaneous, deep-breathing, soul-subduing Christianity, in the fullness and life of its youth, but confessedly created, in the main, by those ages when art reared cathedrals, and the Gregory's developed the science of music—when the liturgy, and the choir, and the cathedral, and the mass, and the elaborate and gorgeous ritual all had their grand development. But our efficiency is not of these elements; it is not of these outward and elaborate works of art; nor do we believe that, under such systems, the Church of Christ can ever attain its highest efficiency or its finest development. With us there is a simple worship, designed to train the soul to a close walk with God, and give it the power of spiritual communion; an order of offices and arrangement of duties that spring from the elements of freedom, yet form the best guard against its excess, and open the largest field for individual labor; an intelligent ministry, selected, not to serve tables, but to preach the Gospel as its chief work: these are the elements of our ecclesiastical system. We rely most upon the faithful, intelligent preaching of the Gospel; we rear a platform where the most intelligent may meet with the humblest and most illiterate—where



the learned shall find that which will purify and refine his spirit, the unlearned that which will elevate him to the same position. We seek, in all the arrangements of God's house, to level *upward*; to make all our children both sincere and clear-minded Christians, thoroughly instructed in the faith; to make all men feel their true nobility, their true liberty, the heirship to which they may attain on earth, and the inheritance to which they may attain in heaven. We claim not for the discipline of our Church an energy that will render its professors superior to all the infirmities of the age in which they may live; it is not the prerogative of any mere system to do this. But we do claim for it an adaptation to the most advanced state of society, and a fitness for elevating man and spreading abroad the Gospel of Christ, equal, to say the least, to any form of Church government the world has yet seen. Its labors for the good of man stand forth, and its victories in behalf of all that is good have sounded abroad over the earth. Behold what presbytery hath done for the world! What battles she hath fought for liberty of conscience! for Christianity against a rampant infidelity! for truth against the combined forces of error! for order against the tumultuous impulses of popular passion! for the crown and cause of Christ against the world! Let her sons understand their position, their privilege, and their power; let them avail themselves of all the advantages which so admirable a system has placed within their reach; let them realize the strength of their organization, and its noble tendencies towards a steady progress, and its varied capacity of adaptation to all states of society; let them see in it a mighty bulwark for the Christian faith, resisting, on the one side, the shock of a wild and stormy Independ-

dency, that in its licentiousness would open wide all the doors of error ; and on the other, the marshaled and trained array of a Papal despotism, that would cover the earth with ignorance and spiritual bondage ; let them look to it, not as in itself powerful, but as that which allows and enables *them* to put forth the highest degree of power in the service of their glorious Lord ; let them heed not the false prophets and evil diviners who cry, Lo, here ! lo, there ! but studying more deeply the simplicity and freedom of their ecclesiastical constitution, let them give to its development, in the increase of the Church of Christ, that energy of heart and mind, which the condition of our land and our position among the other evangelical Churches imperatively require. Then shall we see results most hallowed and noble attending our ministry, and our beloved Church shall hold the foremost position among the hosts of the Lord, and lead the van in the assault upon the kingdom of darkness ; and to her shall be gathered the fervor of humble piety, the might of a thoroughly educated membership, the refinement of a noble literature, the spirituality of a simple-hearted faith in the Redeemer ; and millions, in all parts of the globe, shall look up to her with affection, and rejoice in her as the mother of blessings, rich as heaven, and lasting as eternity. \*

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\* The progress of the Presbyterian Church in this country has been great, and the work it has accomplished in behalf of liberty, of education, and all the elements of a Christian civilization, has been greater even than its success in the acquisition of numbers. Beginning late, in Philadelphia and New York, with all the South and West opening before it, assisted, in part, by devoted men from New England, it has spread abroad through the Union, gathering into its congregations a mass of intelligent and stable piety, maintaining everywhere the character of the ministry for sound learning and simple-hearted religion,

In conclusion, permit me to remark upon these principles in connection with two large denominations of Christians, to whom we are most intimately related; the orthodox Congregationalists, and the brethren who, in 1837 and 1838, forsook the original platform of our Presbyterian Church, and organized themselves on a new foundation. I wish to say here that we do not confound the orderly and semi-presbyterial Congregationalism, of New England, with Independency. Independency, east and west, is one of the refuges of error and a worldly policy. Whoever would break away from wholesome restraint—whoever would undermine the holy truths of Christianity, and find a religion that shall allow him the utmost license of opinion and practice, generally flies to Independency.\*

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holding in check the opposite tendencies to radicalism and perpetual stagnation of Methodism and prelacy, thus rendering them both more efficient in evangelizing men, building up colleges, and academies, and schools with a strong hand, leading the way in all genuine reforms, without loosening itself from those great principles which, although old, are yet true, and essential to the final success of all just changes; and so presenting itself in harmony with American republicanism, as more than any other identified with American institutions, and a fair representative of the best elements of American character.

\* It would be curious to trace out the affinities of error and worldliness with ecclesiastical systems. With which system of the three, presbytery, prelacy, or independency, does error most readily coalesce? We apprehend it will be found with independency and prelacy. Unitarianism is independent; Universalism is independent; Rationalism, as soon as it reaches this country, beyond the connection of Church and State, is independent; Christianity is independent; Campbellism is independent; Oberlinism is independent. Presbyterianism in England, and the little there was in Boston, first became independent before it went over to Socinianism. See Foote's Sketches of Virginia, page 250.

On the other hand, that large class, who, in religion, would have their thinking done for them, who desire repose from the stirring conflict of thought and speech, who mistake sect for Christianity, and form for

But orthodox Congregationalism, so far from sympathising with such things in spirit, and illustrating them in practice, resorts, generally, to the very principles of our ecclesiastical government in the conduct of much of her discipline. Who preach the gospel to them? Not any man whom the spirit may seem to move, but chosen ministers of Christ. Who ordains their clergy? Not the individual Church, however intelligent and influential it may be, but in general, either the associated pastors, or these in connection with the delegates from the Churches chosen to act as a kind of presbytery for this specific purpose. Who administer the temporalities? Deacons. Who decide controversies between Churches—between pastors and Churches—between opposing parties in a Church? A council of ministers, or of ministers and delegates from the Churches. Who decide theological disputes? Pastoral associations, or that disguised presbytery, a Consociation. How is discipline, in difficult cases, conducted? By committees appointed to do, in part, the work of a session. In these things the principles of presbytery are more or less acted on—loosely it is true, yet really.\* And when-

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substance, and would gain heaven by outward compliances and rules; these most naturally surrender themselves to the theatrical pomp and dignity of Puseyism and the Papacy.

\* If it be said that, while this is true, the theoretic independency of each Church is maintained, that all this comes in the shape of advice, and that the Churches are at liberty to receive or reject it, then it may be asked, in turn, what is the worth of a theoretic independency, when, in point of fact, there is no practical independency? The union of Churches in this land is voluntary, and so any Church can, if it chooses, separate itself from the ecclesiastical body with which it is connected. Presbyterians recognize the fact that a single organization may be a Church, and is one as truly before, as after it unites with presbytery.—The theory amounts to nothing, while the practice is to so great an

ever it fails to recognize and act upon them, it shows signs of weakness. It is only through, at least, a partial recognition of them, that error is shut out, and discipline perfected. Presbyterianism takes these principles and systematizes them; it corrects the irregularity, while it leaves the great principles of true Church liberty unimpaired. It was for this reason President Edwards, in 1750, when corresponding with President Davies respecting his admission into the Presbyterian Church, could write thus, "As to my subscribing to the *substance* of the Westminster Confession, there will be no difficulty; and as to the Presbyterian government, I have long been perfectly out of conceit of our unsettled, independent, confused way of Church government in this land; the Presbyterian way has ever appeared to me most agreeable to the word of God, and the reason and nature of things."\* It is for this reason that, from the beginning, the ministers and the people of New England have so readily united with the Presbyterian Church, and found in it a genial home. They find the same great principles of orthodoxy in doctrine, simplicity in worship, and liberty in government, which characterize their own Churches; while they find, also, a general order and system much the same, but

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extent inconsistent with it. To our minds, the efficiency of our Congregational brethren is due to their practical approximation to presbytery, far more than to independency. It is a singular fact, that in Connecticut, where the presbyterial element in their discipline has been strongest, Unitarianism gained but a single Church in a quarter of a century; while, in Massachusetts, where what President Edwards called a "confused, unsettled, independent way of Church government" prevailed, orthodoxy lost her ancient university and hundreds of her largest and finest Churches.

\* Foote's Sketches of Virginia, page 220.

wrought out into a more settled and perfect constitution. All that is most precious in the old is here preserved ; while that which is loose, unsettled, and weak, is here corrected. In point of fact, the Congregationalism of most of New England grew up as the joint product of presbytery and independency. The first Church at Plymouth was, in part, Presbyterian, and the two platforms of Saybrook and Cambridge fully recognize the Presbyterian element in their Churches. Why, then, may we not walk together in harmony as we have ever done, since the foundation of our nation, each co-operating to spread the light and hasten the glory of the millennial morn. Side by side, intermingled and passing from one to the other, we have so grown up as to be recognized by the world as one grand army, supporting the same great principles, and upholding the same institutions, and sending forth a united influence in moulding the hearts of men. The noblest spirits of New England are surely with us ; though there be those who would raise the banner of a narrow sectarianism, and heeding not the peace of our Churches, or the feebleness of divided forces, would create division and discord, and bitterness, where hitherto there has been union, and quietness, and love ; yet we should do injustice to the vast body of noble-minded Christians in that favored section of our country, were we to suppose that they could sympathise with a warfare so unhallowed and fruitless of good. For New England we have suffered much ; for her we stand separate from our ancient connections ; and she would prove recreant to the claims of gratitude, and apostate from the principles of liberty, and deserving of the scorn of all the true-hearted, if, without reason, she stand not shoulder to shoulder with us in the mighty work

of evangelizing a new continent, and working out the world's redemption.

In this land we once had a united Presbyterian Church; it is united no longer. Divided into two nearly equal parts, we stand before the public, and we are, in fact, two distinct denominations. Yet there are scores of thousands of hearts on both sides which beat in unison. What constitutes the difference? It is not in our confessions of faith and terms of communion; they are identically the same. It is not in our forms of government and manner of Church discipline; they are one. It is not that either side have abandoned the great platform of faith, in fact, though not in form; and that these differences of opinion have been created incompatible with a harmonious walk as members of the same denomination. That there are men in both divisions of the Church who differ in the mode of reasoning upon the great facts that compose the system of Paul and Calvin; who, while they firmly hold the facts themselves, and embrace the system with the deepest convictions of its truth, yet differ somewhat in their conceptions of two or three points of the philosophy, in accordance with which these facts find their fullest explanation, is undoubtedly true. But that such differences are inconsistent either with true Presbyterianism, or the uniform practice of our Church from its origin, is entirely a novel and a false idea. In point of fact, precisely the same differences exist in both branches of the Church at *this very hour*. While men remain imperfect, and the principles of a just toleration characterize us, this will always be the case. It has been the glory of our denomination in this land, that it has stood upon this broad platform. Such a liberty is recognized in the very terms of

subscription to the Confession, and has ever been accorded to its ministry and eldership.\* If any persons choose to abandon this ground, and compel their brethren to pronounce the "shibboleth" with precisely their aspiration and their emphasis, then do they abandon the principles and practice of our Church from its origin; if they seek from others not only a firm persuasion of the truth of this system of doctrine, and an honest unfolding of it, but, in addition thereto, a strict conformity to their mode of stating and explaining all its recondite relations, an unfaltering reception of their metaphysics and their logic, then do they arrogate to themselves an authority Presbyterians have never acknowledged, and commend to us a practice in harmony with Popery, but utterly foreign to the freedom of thought and diversity of views which have char-

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\* See the second question put to elders and ministers at their ordination. Do you receive \* \* \* as containing the *system* of doctrine, etc. President Davies, in his address to Messrs. Patillo and Richardson, at their ordination, in 1758, puts the question to them thus, "Do you receive the Westminster Confession of Faith, as the confession of *your* faith; that is, do you believe it contains an excellent summary of the pure doctrines of Christianity, as taught in the Scriptures, and as purged from the corruptions of Popery and other errors that have crept into the Church; and do you purpose to explain the Scriptures agreeably to the *substance* of it?"—Works, vol. 3, page 389.

To the same effect he says, in his Diary, "We allowed the candidate to mention his objections against any article in the Confession, and the judicature judged whether the articles objected against were essential to Christianity; and if they judged they were not, they would admit the candidate, notwithstanding his objections."—Foote's Sketches of Virginia, page 257. The writer has frequently heard his former instructor—now translated to his rest—the Rev. Dr. Miller, express the same sentiments, and he is sure that this has ever been the prevailing opinion of many of the most eminent men in the Church. Such was the well guarded liberty of the founders of our Church in this land—a liberty equally free from licentiousness and bigotry,



acterized our Church from its first organization on American soil. Such are not the narrow views and contracted principles of the immense majority of these two bodies; and it is not on *this* point that this division rests. The difference between us springs from another source, and has reference to a principle vital to the integrity of our constitution. *This separation has arisen from the abandonment, by those who have gone out from us, of the second great principle of constitutional freedom—THE RIGHT OF A FREE AND FAIR TRIAL.* This principle which, as much as any other one, gives our Church its character, and insures within it the rights and liberties of its members, has been struck at in a manner the most open, and with a force that has sent the sound of it abroad through the land. When, by a mere resolution, without the form of trial, without the tabling of charges, without opportunity of appeal or defense, a small majority in the assembly of 1837, declared four synods, five hundred ministers, and sixty thousand communicants no longer members of the Church they loved, and in which thousands of them had been born, and in connection with whose ministrations their locks had blossomed for the grave; when this act of ecclesiastical injustice was the next year re-enacted and approved, and all who would not give in their adherence to this new test of Presbyterianism, in like manner summarily cast out of their communion; then, so far as any act of a majority, in an ecclesiastical court, could effect it, one of the abutments of our system was undermined and thrown down. The body enacting, and the Churches adhering to, an act so revolutionary, effect a fundamental change in the constitution of the Church. For, however express the language of that constitution may be in opposition, yet it

is among the commonest experiences of the past that an unrebuked practice of wrong, in high places, will soon establish a precedent for the same practice in low places; that if the assembly can disregard the constitution by which it is created, and from which it receives all its authority—if it may assume a power never delegated to it and trample upon the rights of inferior judicatories, without rebuke, and with the silent acquiescence of a majority of the Churches—if the wrong be not met and resisted at the outset, the precedent supersedes the constitution, and that, at length, comes to be regarded as common law, which is utterly opposed to well-defined statute law. Nor does the result of this unconstitutional assumption confine itself to the body in which it originated; that which is right in the higher, acquires the force of law in the lower; that which is dictated by the wisdom of an august assembly, becomes an authority for the less wise and august synod; and that which is constituted law by their approbation, easily passes down to the presbytery and Church session, until the right of legislating ministers and members out of the Church, by the resolution of a bare majority, not only without trial, but in direct opposition to a written and known constitution, becomes a settled rule, of which the factious and ambitious may avail themselves to attain that which they never could attain by the legitimate working of the constitution itself. The man who has read the history of the Church and of the world with the least attention, knows that it is from such assumptions, unchallenged and unrebuked, or but feebly resisted, that the fearful apostacy of the Papacy took its rise—that constitutional liberty, whether in the state or in the Church, has no enemy more deadly than the as-

sumed plea of some pressing danger to be avoided, or some immediate advantage to be gained, by a violation of the written law, the expressed will of the people, the fundamental compact which binds the parts together. Once admit that to avoid such danger, or gain such advantage, the constitution may be set aside, and its most fundamental principles violated, and at once such dangers will seem to arise, and such advantages will present themselves, not only to the eyes of overheated controversialists, and earnest partizans, and men ambitious of power, but the more spiritual, who are impatient of the slow methods of discipline and purification prescribed in the constitution and the word of God. On this subject we will trust no man's goodness or amiability to secure our liberties; we will trust alone to a just and fair construction of the form of our government, and the visible attempt to carry it into execution.\*

Against this revolutionary movement of the assembly of 1837 we took our stand in 1838. In opposition to this nullification of the organic law of our Church union we formed the assembly of 1838 on the basis of an unbroken constitution. We protest against this invasion of our liberty; we are resolved to acquiesce in no such assumption of power; we mean to maintain a pure, constitutional Presbyterianism, whoever may forsake this noble platform for the despotic principles of ecclesiastical oppression. Our Church stands as the full representation of an unbroken Presbyterianism. We cherish the kindest of

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\*It is among the most surprising inconsistencies of our nature, that the very men who would prosecute Mr. Barnes and Dr. Beecher, for an alleged failure to conform to a fair construction of the confession of faith, should themselves abandon the form of government, and in violation of one of its leading principles, cast churches, presbyteries, and synods, by resolution, out of the Presbyterian Church.

feelings towards those who, under the plausible management of the few, have been persuaded not to express the indignation which they felt, and the convictions which they still possess, of the utter wrong of these acts which have divided the Church. \* To hundreds of the faithful men, whom, from childhood, some of us have been taught to reverence as fathers or love as brethren, our hearts are knit in a still unweakened affection. They have erred in judgment; they should have risen with us in their might,

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\* It is a well-known fact, that a large number of those now in connection with the New Basis Assembly, regard the cutting off of the synods as illegal and wrong. Why, then, did they not at once see that this wrong was righted? Minds in different sections were differently affected. With some, the idea that the excinded synods contained the majority of the Abolitionists, and that their absence secured a majority for the South, had great weight. The three leading men in doing this work were Drs. Robt. Breckenridge, Plumer, and Baxter—all Southern men, and part, if not all, slaveholders. Slavery had more to do in the final act than all other causes put together. With others, the slanderous reports of heresy, as existing in those synods to an alarming extent, which—though disproved on the floor of the assembly, were then, and have been since assiduously repeated and spread abroad—possessed many minds, and lead them to acquiesce in the act after it was passed, as perhaps the only way of purifying the Church. In several other cases the desire to obtain a permanent majority in favor of the ecclesiastical boards, influenced them to permit the outrage, or made them lukewarm in opposing it. Among some, the fear that Princeton was in danger—that it was contemplated to remove the venerable professors—a most unfounded apprehension, and indignantly repelled by those charged with it—operated to keep them quiet. Others indulged the hope of a speedy reunion, and that, as the thing was done, it was better to wait the developments of Providence, than to stand up against it. Others have labored under a false impression respecting the legality of these acts, as determined by the civil law. Others still, have been so hemmed in by those who approved it, as to acquiesce in the present state of things, hoping the best for the future. Had all those whose convictions were with us, manifested their convictions in acting with us, how different would have been the result! To their own Master they must account for their neglect.

at the first, and righted this wrong, and branded with the infamy it deserves the atrocious acts by which it was sought to cast their brethren, unheard and untried from our communion. But the act is done; and while we can not recognize them as men in this matter true to the constitution they have vowed to maintain, we yet pray that God will overrule the wrong for their and our greater efficiency, in building up the cause of the dear Redeemer, and the spreading abroad, in its purity, that noble constitution of Church government, under which we enjoy a liberty and a power of development, not surpassed in any other religious or civil community; that, warned by the past, they may see to it that under no future plea of necessity, shall another invasion of the rights of the Churches be allowed. And we can not but hope that, when the few unhappy authors of this work of division shall have passed away, the real piety, and Christian manliness, and true attachment to the principles of presbytery, which exist in the great body of these brethren, will reveal themselves in a vigorous assertion of the great principles, now for thirteen years trodden under foot; nor can we doubt but that the time is hastening on, when those who would fain have thrust Joseph into the pit and then sold him into Egypt, will exclaim, "*We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear;*" then will that Joseph, his adversity past, extend to them the forgiveness of a Christian, and the warm embrace of a brother's love.\*

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\* It may yet be seen by those now separated from us, that to us they owe a debt of gratitude for the position which we have taken in seeking to bring them back to the original platform of our Presbyterian Church. It may yet be seen that they have been preserved from similar acts of excision and assumptions of power, by the stand of liberty which we

Meanwhile, my brethren, let us be up and doing. We have before us a vast and deeply interesting work—a work which angels might covet, and in which we should count it a glorious privilege to be engaged. We have a noble ecclesiastical constitution, more truly expressive, in my opinion, of the spirit and power of the apostolic discipline, than that of any of our sister Churches. We have but to attend to our own field, develop our own resources, maintain our own institutions, avail ourselves of the instrumentalities afforded by our form of government, cultivate true piety, labor for revivals of religion, and the establishment of the people in the truth; and then, confiding in the gracious sovereignty of our God to shed his benedictions upon us, we shall go forward, and our Church will accomplish a mission of vast importance to our country and the world.

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have taken; and those who, to gain their own or public ends, would violate the organic law, and change the character of the Church, may understand that the principles of presbytery are not to be thus easily set aside.



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