

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XXVIII.—NO. 4.

OCTOBER, MDCCCLXXVII.

ARTICLE I.

DR. BLEDSOE'S PHILOSOPHY OF VOLITION.

PART SECOND.

We now approach the second part of our undertaking—the more articulate discussion of Dr. Bledsoe's special theory of free agency. He charges us with a delinquency in not discussing it formally in our number of October last; where we did not propose nor undertake to do it. We shall now repair that omission; but in a manner which, we surmise, will contribute very little to his contentment. Other inducements to this discussion exist in the fundamental importance of the doctrine of free agency, and in the relation between Dr. Bledsoe's theory of it and all his other theological lucubrations. He seems to suppose that we evaded the task of arguing for our view, under the pretext of such discussions being superfluous for Presbyterian readers; when in fact we knew that his mighty logic (in the Examination of Edwards) had already demolished all the Calvinistic arguments. The reader shall see. The method we propose is, to define carefully our theory of free agency, and then to prove it. We shall then be prepared to entertain Dr. Bledsoe's rival theory, and weigh its contents—if there be any.

First then, the question between us is not whether man is a real free agent, or whether consciousness testifies that we are, or

ARTICLE IV.

A QUESTION FOR OUR CHURCH : WHO SHALL VOTE
FOR PASTORS?

The framers of our Form of Government, in 1788, evidently had before them a very celebrated Presbyterian manual, of which the title runs thus : "*Collections and Observations Methodized, Concerning the Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of Scotland, in four Books, by WALTER STEUART, Esq., of Purdivan ; to which is added the Form of Process in the Judicatories of the Church of Scotland.*"

On the first page of that work, they met with this statement : "And it is also agreeable to and warranted by the word of God, that some others besides those who labor in the word and doctrine be Church governors, to join with the ministers of the Word in the government of the church and exercise of discipline, which office-bearers Reformed Churches do commonly call ruling elders."

We find a good share of this statement transferred to our Chap. V. of Ruling Elders, but it sounds somewhat feeble, rather less positive and decided, and a little more apologetic, as our fathers put it, than as it streamed from the pen of the sturdy Scotch Presbyterian. What he wrote was Presbyterianism, pure and simple, as it was understood in Scotland. When our fathers took up the pen, it was "to present to the *Christian public* the form they had adopted," which they hoped would meet with "the approbation of an *impartial public*," as well as "the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church universal." Now, in 1648, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, a Platform was "gathered out of the word of God" by the Congregationalists, which, on the subject of the Ruling Elder, was everything the strictest Presbyterian could desire. But sixty years afterwards, at Saybrook, Connecticut, in 1708, the same people adopt the "Heads of Agreement," drawn up in Old England, to effect a union betwixt Presbyterian and Congregationalist ministers there, of which Cotton Mather says : "The brethren of the Presbyterian way in England are lately come into such a happy union with

those of the Congregational, that all former names of distinction are lost in that blessed one of *United Brethren*." These *blessed* Heads of Agreement take very different ground from the Cambridge Platform about ruling elders. The agreement was that "divers being of opinion" favorable to ruling elders, while "others think otherwise," "we agree that this difference make no breach between us." It is now *opinion*, not *doctrine*, they handle. They would act together as one body, though differing on the great fundamental question, What sort of government has Christ established in his Church? Such was the spirit of the New England Congregationalists in 1708. But "the office of the ruler elder" (as Dr. Bacon wrote in 1843) "soon died away." Sixty years had been enough to uproot this doctrine, "gathered out of God's word" by the men of 1648. And so, eighty years after the meeting at Saybrook, when some of these same Congregationalists are in 1788 associated at Philadelphia with sundry Presbyterians of Scotch and Scotch-Irish blood and descent, in making a Form of Government for the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, which was to be "acceptable to *the public* as well as the Head of the Church," it is not so very strange (considering also the circumstances that New England was near neighbor to New York and Pennsylvania, having intimate relations with them, and great influence over them in many ways) that we should find some slight modification of the old Scotch statement of the doctrine of God's word touching the ruling elder.

On the same first page, Steuart of Purdivan says: "It is likewise agreeable to the same Word, that the Church be governed by several sorts of judicatories, such as Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial and General Assemblies," etc. Our fathers having this statement evidently before their eyes, under the same influence above described, modify the Scotch terms into this shape: "And we hold it to be expedient and agreeable to Scripture and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the Church be governed by Congregational, Presbyterial, and Synodical Assemblies." If the doctrine of Church courts be *agreeable to Scripture*, why bring in the practice of the primi-

tive Christians, and especially why introduce that miserable Yankee idea of expediency ?

We turn over to the second page of Steuart of Purdivan, and we read how an election for pastor is to be managed: "When the Presbytery are well informed that a parish for the most part is unanimous to elect a fit person to be their pastor, then they are to appoint one of their number to preach on a Lord's day in the vacant congregation," and to notify the elders, heretors, magistrates and town council, and heads of families, to meet at the church after ten days for the election. On the appointed day, "the church-session is to meet and proceed to the election; and it doth most properly belong to them, as the representatives of that congregation, to look out for a fit person to be their pastor. But seeing the heretors (especially such as reside in the parish) and magistrates, with their town councils, (in burghs) are the most lasting as well as the most considerable heads of families, on whose satisfaction and assistance the comfortable living of ministers may much depend, the 33d Act of King William and Queen Mary's Parliament hath enjoined them, (being Protestants,) with the elders, in subscribing of calls to ministers. It is to be minded that both session and town council do subscribe personally as the heretors do. By the above mentioned Act of Assembly, no person under the censure of the kirk is to be admitted to vote in the election of a minister." Now Chapter fifteenth of our Form answers well to this account of the matter: when the people appear prepared to elect, the session shall convene them; a neighboring minister is to be solicited to assist; on a Lord's day, after sermon, notice shall be given and the day fixed; and when the election comes off, no person shall be entitled to vote who will not submit to church censure, or does not assist in supporting the minister.

And then *the call*, as Steuart of Purdivan gives us the form of it, (pp. 3 and 4,) resembles the same thing amongst us. It runs thus: "We the heretors, elders, and magistrates of the town council of —, being destitute of a fixed pastor, and being most assured by good information and our own experience of the ministerial abilities, piety, literature, and prudence, as also of

the suitability to our capacities of the gifts of you, Mr. A. B., preacher of the gospel," etc. But it is observable that what with us is justly considered the most essential part of the call, and the only test of its reality and sincerity, viz., the promise to pay a certain sum of money for the minister's services, is quite wanting in "the call," as Steuart of Purdivan states it—the reason being, of course, that in Scotland the Church was endowed, whereas, in this country, the support is by individual contributions.

It appears, then, that in the Scotch Kirk, magistrates, landed proprietors, and heads of families, because of the assistance they could give in the comfortable support of the minister, were allowed to be associated with the elders in his election.

And now of what value is this precedent? When we can show that the Church of Scotland, even in her best days, held a certain doctrine, or followed a certain practice, does that prove that we are to hold and to practise the same? By no manner of means. Our appeal is never to the Church of Scotland or any other human authority, but to the Scriptures. And just so we are to understand, when it is proposed to revise our own Form of Government and Book of Discipline, that there is no such sacredness about either document as gives it immunity from correction and improvement. Amongst us there have been several revisions of the work of the fathers of 1788. And what were those fathers but men? And what were Steuart of Purdivan and the Presbyterians of his country and his time but men? We get our Church Government from the Bible, but in no other shape than as we get our Theology. There is a doctrine of Church Government, as of the Attributes, or the Trinity, "to be gathered out of the Scriptures." The principles of Presbyterian Church Government (very few in number) are expressly revealed in the word. It is not given to every age or to every man to see them with equal distinctness of vision. The past forty years in this country have been years of earnest discussion amongst Presbyterians. Perhaps we understand some things now, touching the Church Government revealed in the Bible, better than our fathers did; but probably we do not understand as well as they did, the

points of our theological system. If this be so, letting our doctrinal standards alone in their scriptural glory, we may well amend and improve our Book of Order. And whether it is Steuart of Purdivan, or any other high authority that speaks, we must always fetch him to the word and measure his every utterance by that sole test of all religious truth.

Now, the Scotch Kirk idea touching the election of the pastor was, that the Session, as composed of the representatives of the Church, was the proper body to act for them in such elections. The Session acted for the Church in other matters, and why not in this matter? It acted for the Church at Presbytery and elsewhere, and why not here? The whole discipline and all the spiritual interests of the congregation were confessedly in the hands of Session. In nothing did the people act directly, but always by and through their representatives, for Presbyterian Church Government is representative government. And why should not the Session choose the pastor. Well, the answer of the Scottish Kirk was, that that would be strictly proper, but inasmuch as the comfortable living of the minister may much depend on the satisfaction and assistance of the heads of the families, and inasmuch as the most lasting and considerable of these are the inheritors or landed proprietors and the magistrates and council, it is right that they should be joined with the elders in making the election. Now, the question is, and it is a fair question, and it ought to be fairly answered, Was this answer consistent with the principles of the Presbyterian system revealed in the Scriptures?

But before taking up this question, let us glance at the American Presbyterian idea touching the election of pastors, and contrast it in both particulars with this idea of the Scotch Kirk. In our American Form, the business begins with the Session; in the Scotch Kirk, it begins with the Presbytery. In our Form, the minister invited by the Session, after preaching, notifies "all the members of that congregation" to meet on a given day. In the Scotch Kirk the minister appointed by the Presbytery, after sermon, "intimated that elders, heritors, magistrates and town council, and heads of families," should assemble. In our Form,

no one shall vote who refuses to submit to Church censures, or who does not contribute to the expenses of the congregation. In the Scotch Kirk, no one could vote who was under the censure of the Kirk, but heads of families on whose satisfaction and assistance the comfortable living of the minister might much depend, were allowed the privilege of voting. In our Form, it is understood that all communicants may vote, (females as well as males?) and that in fact "all the members of that congregation" have that right, excepting such church members as will not submit to discipline, and such non-professors as do not contribute to the support of the church. In the Scotch Kirk, the idea distinctly was, that the voting did most properly belong to the elders, as the representatives of the congregation, but that heads of families, whose satisfaction and assistance were important, might also vote. The American Presbyterian idea, therefore, glorifies the people; the Scotch idea exalted the Session.

And now, when we examine all that follows in our Form of Government, nothing is to be found which throws any doubt upon the interpretation just given of its provisions respecting the electors of pastors. The "Questions," for example, which are propounded to the people at the installation of their minister, are applicable to the mere supporters and the members all in one. And in Chap. XVII., Sec. 7, "the heads of families of that congregation who are then present, or at least the elders and those appointed to take care of the temporal concerns of that church," (referring apparently to the *trustees*, who are so often not members of the church,) are to come forward and offer the installed minister their right hand in token of cordial reception.

And then the only record in Baird's or in Moore's Digest, referring to this question previously to 1837, is a decision made by the Assembly, 1711, declaring expressly that "none shall be allowed to vote for the calling of a minister but those that shall contribute for the maintenance of him." (Baird, p. 63. Moore, pp. 404, 405.) In the same place, Moore also informs us that "as adopted by the Synod in 1788, the margin for the direction of the presiding minister read, 'The minister shall receive the votes of none but regular members, and who punctually pay

toward the support of the church.' This was stricken out in the revision of 1820."

It appears, then, to be the idea of our Form, that voting for the pastor is not to be confined to the communicating members, but the supporters of the church are also to take part. And this certainly is and has always been the practice in our Church, so far as known to us.*

Coming now to the question whether the Scotch Kirk's position and practice is according to Scripture, it is to be observed that there are two parts to the question: *First*, Is it according to Presbyterian principles for the elders to choose the pastor for the people? *Secondly*, If others besides the elders are to vote, shall it be the heretors, magistrates, and town council?

As to the first: admitting in full the representative character of Presbyterian church government, still it is not for the Session to choose the pastor, for they do not even choose the elder who rules. The Session are chosen themselves by the vote of the people. It is not admissible, therefore, to say that the people, who, in a certain sense, do make the Session, may not, in that same sense, make the pastor. If the Session have in a certain sense sprung from the people, shall the higher officer not also spring in the same sense from the fountain head whence they derived their being, but spring only from the Session? Have they, who were made by the people, a power to make pastors which the people do not possess? It comes, then, to this, that

* It will be admitted by most readers of this REVIEW, that very high ecclesiastical authority is quoted in favor of such being the rightful practice amongst Presbyterians, when it is stated that in 1863, Dr. Robert J. Breckinridge led in a complaint to the General Assembly "against the Synod of Kentucky in its action limiting the right of voting in the election of a pastor to communicating members of the church."

The resolution of the Assembly was as follows: "*Resolved*, That the complaint be sustained; but the Assembly in this judgment does not intend to condemn a practice prevalent in some of our congregations, in which the right of voting for pastor is confined to communicants." Perhaps this may have been blowing both hot and cold, yet it is evidence that the practice in the Northern Church, as in our own, and in the Scotch Kirk, has generally been in favor of allowing certain non-communicants a vote for pastors. (See Moore's Digest, p. 405.)

representative church government is very far indeed from denying that the people may choose their own representatives; in fact, that choice is of the very essence of representative government. Ruling elders are representatives chosen by the people; teaching elders are also representatives chosen by the people; both together rule over the church; but the rule of the church is always and only by her representatives.

As to the second part of the question: the objection that will, no doubt, be made to the manner in which the Scotch Kirk proposed to extend beyond elders the privilege of voting for pastors, is that church power can be only for Christ's people, and that it cannot be legitimately shared by landed proprietors, magistrates, or town councillors. Upon this objection two remarks are offered: 1. It seems impossible to deny that, *as such*, neither of the classes named can have any right to vote for the pastor of a Christian flock; for what connexion is there between the ownership of land or the office of a magistrate or town councillor, and voting for a pastor? But it is not so clear that non-communicating individuals of either of these classes, being stated worshippers with a Christian congregation, and feeling interested, perhaps deeply and even savingly, in the truth; being also sincerely desirous (perhaps out of a secret, almost unconscious, love for Christ) for the church to grow and spread; being also, perhaps, themselves of the baptized children of the church, but not seeing their way clear to come to the Lord's table; being, yet further, so circumstanced as that without their assistance the pastor cannot be supported; and being, once more, themselves heads of families, and much concerned to have their children under such a ministry as they can approve: it is not clear that such individuals of either of these classes may not legitimately be allowed the privilege of voting against an unsuitable and for a suitable minister. 2. It is not clear that the allowing such parties, as have now been described, to vote for a pastor, is to be considered the bestowing upon them any share of church power. It is not as a ruler in the church they vote for him, although, of course, every teaching elder does rule in every act and exercise of his teaching office. But to allow the parties described the vote

under consideration is merely to allow them to unite in calling such a *preacher* as interests and benefits them; and it is very easy to conceive of this as not strictly a question of church power at all. It is not like voting for a ruling elder.

This view will be further confirmed if it be considered what really is the significance of church power. No class of outsiders, say some, is to be allowed in any case any sort or any degree of this power, for, of course, that can belong only to Christ's true people. Now the question, whom has our Lord constituted the subject of this gift? is a nice and somewhat difficult question, and it has been, and still is, much disputed. One party is found insisting that the rulers, in distinction from the ruled, are its proper subjects; while another party take the exactly opposite view, and hold that the primary subjects of church power are the ruled, and that rulers are simply their creatures and nothing more. Here, then, are two extremes of opinion,—the Romish and the Independent—both dangerously erroneous. As usual, the Presbyterian doctrine runs to neither extreme. It makes the Church, in her organised form, the rulers and the ruled, as they stand indissolubly united in one body, to be the proper subject of Church power. It is not the elders, it is not the members, but it is the Church, including both, which has the power Christ has given to men to act in his name. And now if the Scriptures lay down no law on the subject of voting for a pastor, then that is a circumstance for the Church to arrange in her prudence according to the general regulations of the word. She is to determine in her Form of Government who is to vote for pastors, and it is not otherwise to be claimed by the communicants as their exclusive right. Who gave them such exclusive right? Does the Lord give it in his word? Let it be pointed out then, chapter and verse. If He did not so give it, then it does not belong to them unless the Church judges best to introduce such a provision as an entirely new feature into her Constitution. For this or any other exercise of church power belongs not to any individuals or to any class of men, except it be given them either by Christ or by his Church. No individual and no class can claim any aboriginal rights in the premises. It

is the Church to whom Christ gives all church power, and she must give it to whom she judges fit. This is not a matter settled directly by the Word, but by the Church in her wisdom as the Lord has authorised her to determine it. The question of voting for pastor, as to its exercise by males or females, by church members or by church supporters, is not a scriptural, but a constitutional question.

The case stands thus: here is a community of people attached to the Presbyterian doctrine and order, some of them in full communion with the church, some of them baptized members but not communicating, and some supporters of the church, regular attendants on its ordinances, and more or less interested about their own and their children's religious instruction and training. And a minister is to be elected to teach them the truth and be the means of enlightening and saving them. Now to whom will the church intrust the privilege of voting for this minister who is to communicate spiritual benefits to all these classes, and receive carnal ones in return from them all? Some will answer promptly, as perceiving no difficulty at all in the case, "Oh, of course, to nobody but communicants." And when asked to give a reason for this decision, it is, that church power belongs to the Bride; but evidently *the Bride* does not mean the communicants of that single congregation, so that the answer is a manifest *non sequitur*. And then, again, it is not a question of church *power*, but of *preaching*. The man to be voted for is, so far as concerns all besides the communicants, only a teacher and not a ruler. Why not let their votes declare whether they like or dislike him in this capacity simply of *their teacher*; for if they like him not, how can he hope to do them any good?

This view of church power being given only to the *cætus fidelium* (comprising both officers and members, collectively considered) is sustained even by John Owen, the famous Independent. He says, "The calling of bishops, pastors, elders, is an act of the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. But these keys are originally and properly given unto the whole Church." He says of Church power, "it is given to the whole Church." The Church (he says) is the bride, the wife, the queen, of the King

of the Church, Christ Jesus, and the power of the keys is expressly granted to her. (*True Nature of a Gospel Church*, Works, Vol. XX., pp. 419, 420.) It belongs not to any individual or class until it is given them by the Church. To whom she approves, she gives the right to hold office; to whom she approves, she gives the right to vote for office-holders.

This same view is also set forth by Bannerman, the great Presbyterian ecclesiologist, as being maintained by many of the most eminent Presbyterian authorities, such as Voetius and Gillespie. And he quotes, as expressing it distinctly, the 25th chapter of the Confession, where we read of Christ giving the ministry, oracles, and ordinances to the catholic visible Church.

And here it is necessary to refer to the error, as touching this matter, which disfigures the Revised Form of Government now before our Presbyteries for their adoption or rejection. In the first article of chapter second, section third, it is said, very properly, "The power which Christ has committed to his Church vests in the whole body, the rulers and the ruled, constituting it a spiritual commonwealth." But then, infelicitously, it is added, "This power, as exercised by His people, extends to the choice of those officers whom he has appointed in his Church." The meaning is, that the people choose the officers. For, in the second article of chapter sixth, section first, we read, "Since all the power which Christ has committed to the Church and vested in his people, is exercised by them in the choice of their officers, and since the government of the Church is representative, the right of the election of their officers by God's people," etc., etc. Plainly what is intended to be asserted is, that the people elect the officers. But "*the people*," as such, ought not to have been confounded with "*the Church*" and with "*God's people*," or "*His people*," which term necessarily includes, according to the Presbyterian view, an *element* additional to *the people*, viz., *the officers*. It is not true that "all the power which Christ has committed to the Church and vested in his people," is to choose officers. It is not true that the choice of officers is all the exercise of Church power which belongs to "His people." That may be all which the people of a given congregation are allowed

to do, but it is by no means all the power which is committed to "the Church," and vested in "God's people."

But in answer to our call for proof from Scripture, it may be said that the Apostles authorised the brethren to look out amongst them seven men to be ordained deacons, which plainly gives the choice of Church officers to the members of the Church. But let it be observed, that at that time there could hardly have been any others but *members in full* connected with the Church; certainly there could not have been then any adult males who had been baptized in their infancy. The Apostles allowed the brethren to choose, and did not choose for them. This settles the question, that it is not Church rulers, whether one or many, who are to appoint pastors, but the people are to elect such as they desire. And this principle must stand now and to the end. The Church is a representative republic, and chooses its own officers. This is the point which is established by the election of the seven deacons. But that election does not necessarily determine who are "*the brethren*," who are the Church members to vote in the election. If the Church is now in a very different position, as to her members, from what she then occupied; having now, as she had not then, a numerous class of what may be called *secondary* members—members baptized but not communicating; and having, what she had not then, many friendly, sympathising supporters, whom she ought to bind more closely to herself, instead of driving them away from her; both of which classes want the privilege of indicating whom they could and would accept readily and gladly as their and their children's religious teacher; may it not be granted that a different rule for the election of officers is requisite now, and that it belongs now to the Bride, as it did then to the Apostles, to regulate the matter according to the dictates of prudence and the general provisions of the word?

And here, perhaps, it will be said, that the Bride being the catholic visible Church, we cannot point to the Form of Government of any one denomination of Christians, and say that the Bride has enacted it. This is, of course, admitted. And yet we must maintain that in the sad and lamentable condition of

separation and division in which the people of the Lord find themselves, and which they are not able, however sincerely so disposed, to bring to an end, the very nearest access that can be had to the Bride, is, for us, in the communion of our own Presbyterian Church, so that what it enacts we must and we will gladly accept as enacted for us by the Bride.

Here at length there arise to be considered the three forms of a rule on this subject submitted by the Assembly at New Orleans to the Presbyteries. The *first* one confines voting for ruling elders and deacons to communicants in good standing, but in the election of the pastor admits also to a vote adults regular in attendance on the common ordinances, and regular contributors to the support of the ministry. The *second* one calls for a separate vote by non-communicating adult members of the Church, regular in their attendance and regular contributors, which separate vote is to go to the Presbytery, that their desires may be understood by that body. The third one allows no one to vote for any church officer except members in good standing.

The second has appeared to many to be liable to the grave objections, that it is awkward and cumbersome, and liable to be considered offensive to the classes named, and also liable to the danger of its arraying against one another the two elements referred to in the rule. It is thought by judicious persons that such a rule will constitute a bid by the Church for hostile factions to arise in every congregation when about to elect a pastor. Accordingly it is urged, and with great show of reason, that the Presbyteries would do well to adopt either the first or the third of these rules, rejecting altogether what has been called the compromise rule.

The third one is a very rigid rule now proposed to be introduced into our form. It excludes all mere friendly supporters of the pastor from a vote, and so it must necessarily cripple four-fifths of all our churches, inasmuch as many of the excluded will take offence and withdraw their help. The consequence will be a heavy blow to ministerial support, already in a languishing condition in our churches. But this is not the chief objection. It excludes from this kind of coöperation with the Church what

may be considered a very hopeful class of persons—such as stately attend on the ordinances, and regularly give of their means to support the gospel. Of one who was like this class of modern hearers of the gospel, the Lord said, “Thou art not far from the kingdom.” Such persons are to be attracted to the Church by every lawful means, and never repelled. The Church suffers by repelling such, and they suffer—perhaps fatally and forever. Now, contrasted with this unhappy influence and tendency of the rigid rule, what must be the operation of the liberal one? That rule puts the Church and the ministry in the true and proper attitude of being light to the world and salt to the mass which is to be saved. Where the officer to be elected is for the church members as such most especially, there it confines the vote to church members. But where the officer is to have most important relations, and be in the most close and intimate connexion with such as are regular attendants and supporters, there this liberal rule allows these classes to express their preferences at the election. They are not to exercise church power in voting for a ruler as such, but, viewed as a teacher merely, they vote whether they wish or wish not the instructions of a certain minister. The liberal rule is designed to give the pastor every advantage in dealing with these hopeful classes. He is to instruct and exhort and persuade and convert; by all means he ought to be the man whom they have chosen to do for them these great and needful works. So important is this that one of our most eminent pastors and preachers (Dr. Palmer of New Orleans) says, and says well, that he would never accept a call where the outsiders had not had the opportunity to express their wish for his services.

But the greatest objection to the rigid rule remains to be stated. It excludes from voting for the pastor all the baptized non-communicating members of the church of adult age. It is obvious, of course, as Dr. Thornwell expresses it, (*Works*, IV., 327,) that in every commonwealth there are peculiar privileges and peculiar disabilities—rights and privations are conditioned by qualifications and characters. It is so in the Church. All may not be officers, all may not come to the Lord’s table, all are not

capable of technical church discipline, which is not for the dead, but only for the living. Now, the rigid rule makes the expression of a preference for one teacher rather than another, to be as much beyond the capacity of this class of persons as is the power to discern the Lord's body by faith, and as is the life of God begun in the soul. It seems to make the power to cherish preference and liking for one teacher rather than another to be as great, as peculiar, as distinctive, a thing as the new birth itself. Surely it will not be denied that a man may be incompetent to discern the Lord's body, and yet competent to say whether he is interested and attracted by a given preacher, and prefers him to any other.

Dr. Thornwell (Works, IV., 333,) says, "The Church contains a sanctuary and an outer court. True believers are in the sanctuary, others (baptized non-communicating members) in the outer court, and the sanctuary is constantly filled from the court." Now, the rigid rule seems to regard the outer court as full only of "enemies and aliens." In one aspect this is true. Yet, is there not an aspect in which those who frequent, voluntarily, the outer court deserve to be viewed otherwise than as aliens and foes? Do we not wish and hope to attract them within? Voetius, the celebrated Dutch theologian, in his great *Ecclesiastical Polity*, as quoted by Dr. Thornwell, (Works, IV., 344,) divides the "people," in contradistinction from the "clergy," into "*partes proprias*," that is, proper members of the Church, and "*partes analogicas*," that is, those who are analogically members. Among these latter he puts the baptized sons of the Church, and then names three other classes—"audientes, catechumeni, competentes," that is, those who *listen*, those who are in a *class of learners*, and those who are *seeking after the truth*. There seems no room to doubt that the eminent Hollander would have found amongst the "aliens and enemies," who swarm the outer court, some not altogether indocile children of the Church, some willing listeners, some anxious learners, and some sincere seekers of the truth. And he must therefore have said that the disposition to repel rather than attract such is a disposition that smacks of a somewhat fanatical zeal.

In all the struggles of Presbyterianism in days gone by for the "people's right to choose their church officers," the consent of the congregation has ever been insisted upon against patrons and princes, against prelates and popes. But in the old country, where chiefly this battle has been waged, the congregation has usually consisted altogether of church members—few ever reached the years of discretion without making a public profession of faith. It is different in this country. In Scotland only communicants voted, but that included every head of a household. Our ideas of the Supper perhaps are stricter, or our family training is looser, or the cause may be some other still; but the fact is patent, that many heads of families are diligent attendants on the ordinances amongst us who yet see not their way clear to the table. They may be listeners, learners, and seekers; they may be such as were baptized into the adorable name; they may be the sons of the Church, anxious to be enlightened, themselves and their children, by the preacher they prefer; and yet on some severe, anabaptistic principle, which construes them all to be sons of Belial and children of the devil, their wishes shall not be consulted in the choice of their pastor!

One writer says, "The very idea of those who profess no faith in Christ, and practise habitual disobedience to his authority, acting as electors on such an occasion, is repugnant to the fundamental notion of the Church. For to the Church is given the Holy Spirit to direct in all matters legitimately coming before her for adjudication or for action. And when, more than in the election of a pastor, does the Church need the guidance of the promised Spirit?" Surely the fanaticism of such a statement hardly needs a word to point it out. Will every individual church, where non-communicants are rigidly excluded, be infallibly guided by the Spirit in the election of a pastor? Or, does *the Church*, to which the Spirit's infallible guidance is promised, mean the individual church at all?

Another writer calls it "monstrous" to intrust "unconverted men and women" with such "a prerogative of church power," "because (1) contrary to all analogy in human governments; (2) averse from the spirit of Scripture; and (3) fraught with

danger to the dearest interests of the Church." As to the first point, it is not very Presbyterian to argue from human governments to that of the Church; yet, in point of fact, this very government of the United States does the very thing this writer alleges that no human government would do, for it allows the "citizen of a rival and hostile kingdom, if he be simply a resident and a tax-payer, the same sovereign right with the native citizen," without pretending to know whether he is converted to republicanism or not. The government never looks at all to the state of the alien's heart, but welcomes him to the vote, on the ground of his residence and tax-paying, with the merest formality of an oath of allegiance, often in a language of which he knows not a word, and about which neither he nor the government officer who administers it, cares one farthing, as everybody knows. As to the second point, it certainly is not contrary to the Scriptures to accept others than communicants as, in an important sense and for important ends, true members of the Church. As to the third point, the idea that a vote for pastor by certain classes not communicants is fraught with danger to the dearest interests of the Church, is manifestly a new discovery. The Presbyterians of Scotland never entertained that idea. And the Old School Assembly, North, met at Peoria, Illinois, as this writer himself tells us, decided that the Form of Government, as it now stands, means that the vote does belong to such classes. And such, we venture to affirm, is the theory and the practice of most of *our* churches and Presbyteries. Another objection is urged by the same writer, when he hesitates not to charge that "the whole meaning of allowing such classes a vote is to secure the support, the moneyed help, of those who voluntarily remain among the enemies of our blessed Lord. It is pure simony—selling church power for an annuity." To such a base and unworthy charge, who would stoop to make any reply? Could anything but a spice of fanaticism lead an otherwise fair and sober writer to make such a dreadful charge against the honest convictions of his brethren?

Another form in which the same idea is presented, is as follows: "Church power in every case, and in every form, and in

every degree of it, necessarily belongs to Christ's true people alone." Thus they conformed the Church of Christ, the Bride to whom belongs, by gift, all promises, privileges, and power, with individual Christians or individual congregations. Thus also they take for granted that all communicants are of the true people of the Lord. Thus also they set forth an idea very similar to what may be and is called the Puritan;* that is the Brownist or Independent idea of the Church. It is, that the Church is only of regenerate persons, and that every Church is to sit and judge whether an applicant for admission is truly born of God. "A particular church consists of a number of true believers united together by mutual covenant, and no one is to be admitted to church membership who does not give credible evidence of being a true child of God. And by 'credible evidence' is to be understood not such as may be believed, but such as constrains belief. All such persons, and no others, are admitted to the Lord's Supper. Such persons only as are thus *judged* to be regenerate, constitute the Church. All other professors of the true religion, however correct in their deportment, are denied that privilege." (See Hodge's Systematic Theology, Vol. III., pp. 545, 569-571.) But the scriptural idea of the Church, held forth in our standards, is that the Church consists of all who *profess* the true religion, together with their *children*. We express or imply no judgment that a man is regenerate when we receive him into church fellowship. We only accept him as making a credible, or perhaps we might better say *a not incredible, profession* of his faith. The responsibility is on him. The Lord has given us no power to judge the hearts of men, and therefore does not expect us to judge them. But we may and we must judge their professions; we may and we must judge their lives, and refuse to believe any man's profession, if his principles or his

* The name *Puritans*, originally a much wider one than now, is, according to modern usage, restricted generally to the Independents, or followers of Brown, and the Congregationalists, or followers of Robinson. The latter are fain to repudiate the former. But Dr. Leonard Bacon, in his *Genesis of the New England Churches*, seems to have found a name he likes better, viz., *Separatists*, and scouts the name *Puritans* for the New England people.

works contradict it. Nothing, however, authorises a refusal to admit a man into the Church, which would not require us to exclude him if he were already a member.

Now, manifestly, it was not the purpose of God that the Church on earth should consist exclusively of believers. Our Lord expressly condemns all attempts by men to separate the tares from the wheat, and says, "Let both grow together till the harvest." There never has been a *pure* Church on the face of the earth. And perhaps there is no more dangerous error touching the Church, than that which makes her to consist only of regenerate souls. This was the error of the Novatians or Cathari, in A. D. 251, and of the Donatists in A. D. 311-415, and of the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century, even under the milder form of their doctrine, which Menno Simonis introduced. And this again was the error of the intemperate Brownists. Dr. Hodge says (Vol. III., pp. 571-2) of the form of the error as the Brownists and those who followed them in New England stated it, that it is (1) a novelty that never was adopted by any Church until the rise of the Independents. (2) It has no warrant from Scripture, either by precept or example. Under the old economy, those who professed the true religion were admitted to the theocracy, but no body of men sat on the question of their being regenerate. And the apostles acted on the same principle, not examining nor deciding upon the regeneracy of the five thousand admitted in one day in Jerusalem. (3) That the attempt to make the visible Church consist exclusively of true believers, must not only fail of success, but also be productive of evil. He adds that experience proves it a great evil to make the Church consist only of communicants, and to cast out into the world, without any of that watch and care which God intended for them, all those, together with their children, who do not see their way clear to come to the Lord's table. And he quotes an old writer, who says: "In Church reformation, 'tis an observable truth, that those who are for too much strictness, do more hurt than profit to the Church." And from another he quotes: "If we do not keep persons in the way of a converting grace-giving covenant, under those church dispensations wherein grace is given, the

Church will die of a lingering though not violent death. The Lord hath not set up the churches only that a few old Christians may keep one another warm while they live, and then carry away the Church into the cold grave with them when they die; no, but that they might, with all care and with all the obligations and advantages which may be, nurse up still successively another generation of subjects to our Lord, that may stand up in his kingdom when they are gone." Elsewhere Dr. Hodge says (III., 577-8): "All attempts to preserve the purity of the Church by being more strict than the Bible, are utterly futile, nay, seriously injurious. They contravene the plan of God. They exclude from the watch and care of the Church, multitudes whom he commands his people to look after and cherish. Confining the visible Church to communicants in churches, unchurches the great majority even of the seed of the faithful. The Church does not consist exclusively of communicants. It includes also all those who, having been baptized, have not forfeited their membership by scandalous living.

Now, let the candid reader say whether the new and rigid rule which proposes to shut out from all share in calling a minister all the baptized sons of the Church who are not communicants, does not bear a striking resemblance in the spirit of it, to this Catharist and Donatist, this Anabaptist and Brownist conception of the Church. Meaning no offence by the question, Is there not a spice of the old fanaticism in the very idea that the head of a house and the father of a family, who is regular in his attendance on the common ordinances, and who contributes conscientiously and cheerfully to the support of the ministry, simply because he has certain difficulties in the way of his making a public profession of the faith, which it may well be hoped is in him, shall be by this new law excluded from all participation in the choice and calling of a minister? Are not the baptized sons of the Church really the *members*, and what for, then, shall they be excluded from this privilege, which has always been theirs? Shall we give to the Baptists a fresh proof that we really hold infant baptism very cheap, and do not, in truth, believe what we say of the church membership, which Baptism acknowledges our children to pos-

sess? And are we willing to cast out, as it were, into the cold world, and away from the watch and care and full sympathy of the Church, those who are only too honest and sincere, perhaps, to make a hasty profession of religion in public? Shall we not keep such persons in the way of a converting, grace-giving covenant, and under those dispensations wherein grace is given, and by cherishing all the interest they have in the Church's welfare, and nursing up all their love for her ministers, and encouraging all the delight they show in the preaching of any one of God's messengers—shall we not, by these and all other like means, seek to draw them out to a full and hearty profession of faith, and to endeavor to raise up successive generations of real hearty subjects of our Lord?

There seems to be no principle forbidding the present liberal way of allowing the baptized and the constantly attending and supporting classes to vote in the election of a pastor; for it is not as ruler, but teacher, they vote for him; and the Church, which is the subject in which Church power inheres, has the right to grant them the privilege of voting. But on the other hand, there is a principle which demands that, at least, the baptized non-communicating church members shall have this privilege, and that is the principle that he is a veritable church member, and ought to be encouraged as much as possible to recognise his own membership. It will never do for our Church to go into any such a narrow, stringent, unscriptural position, as the denial of the real membership of her baptized ones will constitute. They cannot be church officers, nor go to the table, nor be subjected to technical discipline, because they do not profess to be alive and in Christ; but they are nevertheless church members, and should be allowed to experience that their church membership is indeed a reality, by their being privileged to vote, not indeed for church rulers, or for deacons, but for the man whom they shall feel is best fitted to teach and guide them into the truth that saves.

So much is to be urged for the adult baptized members of our Church. A few words, now, touching all the classes together, whose participation in the election of pastor has been advocated

in this article. As to them all, the eminent Gillespie says (Miscellany Questions, p. 9): "It is very expedient for the credit and better success of the ministry, that a bishop have a good name and testimony even among them that are without, as the apostle teacheth, 1 Tim. iii. 7." He adds in the same place, that "it is a common maxim among the Fathers, Schoolmen, and Summists, *Quod ad omnes pertinet omnium consensu fieri debet*," which means that "what pertains to all, should be done with the consent of all." Now, unquestionably, the choice of the minister, who is to teach them and their families, is a matter which much interests all these classes—it manifestly pertains to them, and therefore, while they ought not to vote for ruling elders and deacons, Gillespie's observation shows the propriety of their voting for pastors.

His next remark is, that "the free consent of the people in the election is a great obligation and engagement, both *to them*, to subject themselves in Christian and willing obedience to him whom they have willingly chosen to be over them in the Lord, and *to the person elected*, to love them and to offer up himself gladly upon the service and sacrifice of their faith;" and this may certainly be applied to the classes in question.

On page 4 of the same treatise, Gillespie quotes from Walæus (Tom. II., p. 52): "The feeders of the people's souls must be no less (if not more) beloved and acceptable than the feeders of their bodies; therefore, these must be chosen with their own consent, as well as those." This sets forth the true position of the pastors with respect to all these classes. It is not as rulers, but as *feeders of their souls*, they need pastors, and it is absolutely necessary, if the feeding is to be done successfully, that their free consent be given to the choice of the feeders.

On page 12, Gillespie says: "Though nothing be objected against the man's doctrine or life, yet if the people desire another, better or as well qualified, by whom they find themselves more edified than by the other, that is a reason sufficient." Who does not see that this observation applies just as fully to the classes in question as to the communicants themselves?

It is to be observed that in all this discussion, Gillespie is

urging the rights of the people against the claims of patrons and prelates; he is advocating the liberal course of proceedings for his time against the strict and rigid course. That is precisely the attitude manifested in this article. Gillespie is for the consent of the people as against a one-man power; this article urges the consent of all who are concerned, as against the narrow and iron rule, which would confine election to but one class of those interested.

Finally, on the same page, Gillespie meets the objection that to let the people vote would be very dangerous for an apostatising congregation; for a people inclining to heresy or schism will not consent to the admission of an orthodox or sound minister. This is just the way that the advocates of the iron rule object to the liberal one: "it will result in the choice of bad men for pastors." Now, that is a strange idea for those who hold to the power which Presbytery has over ministers, to refuse installing, and even to depose the bad ones. But mark how Gillespie sets forth the ability of the people to discern the fittest, and their disposition to select the best minister. He says, on the next page, (p. 13,) "a people may follow leading men, and yet see with their own eyes, too; . . . the congregation judgeth not simply and absolutely whether one be fit for the ministry, but whether he be fit to serve in the ministry among them; . . . a rude and ignorant people can judge which of the two speaketh best to their capacity and edification." And even when he admits that "oftentimes the greater part shall overcome the better part, because in every congregation there are more bad than good, more foolish than wise," this great Presbyterian leader is still found urging the necessity of *popular election*, and his wise counsel is thus given: "*De incommodis prudenter curandis, non de re sancta mutanda temere, sapientes videre oportuit.*"