

# THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XII.—No. I.

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APRIL, MDCCCLIX.

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ARTICLE I.

## THE DEACONSHIP.\*

The life of the Church, like every other kind of life, is perpetuated and invigorated by its own activities. The mode in which these activities are exercised constitutes its organization. This, of course, takes its form from the nature of its life, just as the peculiar form of each species of plant and animal is fixed by the nature and functions of its life; and the perfection of that form consists in its giving the fullest and freest exercise to those functions. For though the form springs from the life, that life may not be healthy; or its early activities may be prevented by some external obstructions from working out their appropriate effects, in which case the form that results must necessarily be defective. So a tree or an animal may, in its growth, be so obstructed in its development as to produce serious deformity, which may afterwards greatly interfere with the vigorous working of its life. While,

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\* This article was transmitted to us by vote of the Synod of Virginia, and is published at their request. It was read before that body by the author, Rev. James B. Ramsay of Lynchburg.—Eds. S. P. R.

and, on the other hand, the demonstration of La Place's theory would afford no evidence whatever of the truth of the Lamarckian hypothesis. To regard them as interlinked, dependent and essential parts of a great atheistic scheme, is to mistake entirely their mutual relationship.

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ARTICLE VII.

INAUGURAL DISCOURSE ON CHURCH HISTORY AND  
CHURCH POLITY.\*

In assuming the office to which your partial kindness, my brethren, confirmed by the vote of the Synod of Georgia, has raised me, I am unfeignedly sensible of my unfitness every way to perform its duties; and, therefore, were it not that the dispensations and leadings of Divine Providence towards me, privately, seem to signify that I should acquiesce in this election, I would, on that account, have respectfully declined the call. Having accepted it, and having been inducted into this office, I must now hope with the Divine blessing, by prayer and pains, to prepare myself in some measure for an adequate discharge of the duties you have imposed.

You have appointed me to preside over that department of instruction in our Theological School which relates specifically to the Church. To one of my colleagues you have given for his branch of instruction, the interpretation of the Scriptures—associating with him an assistant teacher of the Hebrew and other Oriental languages; to another, the Pastoral and the Preaching work; to another the Doctrines of Theology; to me, the Church considered in respect to all the principles of her Divine polity, and to all the events of her history from the beginning to the present time.

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\* This article is the Inaugural Address of Dr. Adger, delivered before the Board of Directors of the Theological Seminary and the Synod of South Carolina, at Sumterville, S. C., Friday evening, October 29, 1858.

The History of the Church is indeed a wide field of research, and a noble sphere of instruction. But who could undertake to teach the whole of it? In making me your Professor of Church History, you surely do not mean that I shall profess to do any such work as that! A full and complete learning and teaching of the History of the Church of Christ would demand a full and complete mastery by the pupils as well as by the Professor of nearly all human history, because, for the most part, wherever in human affairs there has entered no influence from the Church of Christ—wherever the interests of a nation have had no connection at all with the interests of the Church of Christ, neither influencing them nor being influenced by them—there, for the most part, there has been little for history to record, and history has recorded but little. The world and all its kingdoms have been kept in being and in action for the church's sake. They have constituted simply her theatre upon which to act out the drama of her life and progress.

To teach the whole of Church History, also demands the complete scrutiny and exhibition of nearly the whole of human philosophy. For what philosophy is there, ancient or modern, which has not affected the doctrine, and so the interests of the Church of Christ? "In Plato (says Professor Butler) philosophy is but another name for religion." And so in all her teachers philosophy is just the wisdom of men expressing itself upon man's nature, origin, duty, destiny—in other words, philosophy is just the opinions of men concerning those very subjects, amongst others, which Christianity treats of. And to know the influence Christianity has had, and the effects Christianity has wrought, we have to comprehend also the influences those opinions have had, and the effects those opinions have wrought.

You will not therefore expect me to teach the whole history of the church. Suppose no other obstacle to stand in the way, more than sufficient would be the very limited period of time which is allotted to our course. Until the church shall require her students to devote a fourth year to their studies, all I can hope for is to be able to acquaint them with the main facts of Church History, to furnish them the key to those facts, to in-

spire them with a taste for this study, and to impress them with a sense of the value of this knowledge.

And what is the value of a knowledge of Church History? I answer that, just as the review by any man of the dealings of Divine Providence with him personally is calculated to make him humble, and at the same time thankful, so the study of Church History by our rising ministry will teach them, and through them the Church, humility and thankfulness—and also faith and hope.

I answer again, that indeed it is impossible there should be any intelligent acquaintance with the church, as she now is, where there is not a due knowledge of the church as she has been, nor any proper conceptions of her future that are not associated with correct apprehensions of her past.

Again I answer by observing, that this study is the best illustration of Dogmatic Theology. What is it you get from Theology? You get Divine ideas. But Church History gives you these Divine ideas in action. She takes the abstract truths and clothes them with dramatic interest. In her hand these old truths, long ago settled and determined, enact over again before you their old battles with error, and excite you in the same way and for the same reason as some question of to-day; and, therefore, under her magic influence they get power to impress you strongly, and so you perceive them as you never did before. Theology is a grand study. It is the science of sciences. It systematizes the principles and facts which God himself reveals. It takes the most glorious truths, the most inspiring as well as most overwhelming considerations ever viewed by the human mind, and presents them in their mutual relations and due order before that mind. But Church History, gathering in her right hand these truths, with her left hand grasps her brightly burning torch, and exploring the long track of ages past, exhibits before you the operation of these truths upon the character and conduct of mankind; their influence upon the nations; their power in the lives and deaths of individual men receiving them. You thus get the clearest views of the doctrines themselves when you see them held up in **this** practical point of view; when you see how they have been

expressed in different ages and languages; and when you have them continually contrasted with various conflicting errors that have successively been invented by the adversary, in order to corrupt or to overthrow them. The History of the Doctrines is therefore a necessary help to a perfect understanding of the doctrines. And then, what a confirmation of our faith in the truth of the doctrines of theology is it, to observe their effects amongst men! And what a testimony to the truth of these doctrines is it also, to find, by the researches of Church History, to how great an extent through all the course of ages, the faith of God's people has been constant, has been one and unalterable! And what a safeguard against the inventions of heresy does the knowledge of Church History afford! It rebukes the rashness of all attempts to improve that which has stood the test of ages—to improve that which, it plainly teaches us, was in the very beginning of it no work of man, but revealed by God, and therefore, not to be improved by man. Church History presents us with a constant recurrence of the same opinions of men setting up themselves against God's Revelation of truth. It shews you in regard to this Revelation how, as Archer Butler expresses it, speaking of Intellectual Philosophy: "The various ages have returned the echoes of old errors; have rushed with all the ardor of novelty and inexperience into illusions long before exposed; and have mistaken again and again *that* for the coinage of eternal truth which a forgotten antiquity had proved to be the base alloy of prejudice, or the gilded forgeries of a too active imagination."

Again, in answer to the question of what value is Church History, let me suggest that the whole of Christianity is based upon *facts* which are the staple of all history. The proof of Christianity depends upon *facts*,—as the facts of Christ's life, death and resurrection. The substance of Christianity also is *facts*, with some accompanying doctrines and precepts. Christianity therefore besides being, as has been well said, the only religion that claims to be based on evidence, or that is at pains to furnish evidence wherewith to accredit herself, is also the only religion which fair, impartial, honest history can help. The History of Christianity or of the Church, accordingly, is

all important, especially to the Christian Ministry. I have said Christianity is based on the facts of Christ's life, death and resurrection. What is the whole History of the Church either before or since the period of those particular facts, but the History of God's doings for and with his church—the history of the facts brought to pass by Him, or with His permission, in the progress of His working out the fulfilment of His counsels respecting His elect people. If theology is of value which treats of the things spoken by God, Church History must surely be of value which treats of the things done by God. If the true History of the Church had been written in complete fullness and by an inspired pen, it must have comprehended a journal of all the proceedings of the God-Man-Mediator in the progress of His work as Head and King of His Church! What has been written of Church History by uninspired men is, of course, a very feeble, yet by no means a useless attempt to realize what it was not given to man to accomplish, but what may all along have been and may still be in progress of preparation, by the pens of angelic or of sainted scribes in the upper temple!

This department of instruction, so inseparably connected with all history and all philosophy and all theology, and indeed with all learning, making all tributary to itself, and in its turn enlightening and guiding all; this most comprehensive and valuable of the sciences—for it both includes and perpetuates every one of them—has been well called an Encyclopedic department. I have acknowledged to you, my brethren, that I do not hope to learn, much less to teach it all, but only to introduce my pupils to the main facts it presents, and to impress them with a sense of the value of the study, as one which they are to begin with me indeed: but much more, to pursue to the end of their ministry, as doubtless we shall pursue it indeed throughout our whole eternal being. For, taking up just one of the branches of Church History, into which authors divide the subject, viz: the history of the religious and moral life—who will question that our eternal being may find room for unending research and investigation into God's gracious and glorious doings in and for the innumerable hosts of His re-

deemed people, even in this one line of His adorable working? Who will question that in heaven the history of God's dealings with each of us will instruct all the others; that the religious experience, not only of Abel, of Enoch, of Job, of Abraham, of Elijah, of Apostles and of Martyrs, but also that of thousands and millions of the perfectly obscure saints of God, shall still serve to edify our faith, and still minister to the ever-growing power of grace in us; whilst we thus for ever and for ever ask one another, and answer one another questions in Church History—questions about all the way by which our Divine Shepherd led home his sheep? I shall hope to impress our students with some slight sense of the value of this study, which once they begin they shall never cease to carry on.

I said that I hoped to teach the main facts of Church History, and to give my pupils the key to those facts. It is this office and duty which constitutes the power and the charm of the professorship to which I have been appointed; henceforth my high calling, my business and my privilege, is to interpret the facts of Church History. And to have the facts interpreted for them, and to learn how to interpret them for themselves—this it is, undoubtedly, which is to constitute for our pupils, the charm of the study in an intellectual point of view. Bare facts are of no value, and of little interest. The value of any fact, historically considered, is in the principle it exhibits and illustrates; and *isolated* facts are of little value, even when considered with regard to their principle. It is the connections and the sequences of every fact—its dependencies and relations, its causes and results, we love to trace. The philosophy of the facts is far more attractive and exciting, and important, than the facts themselves. As has been well said, "there is a profound order; a regular plan; a comprehensive system lying at the bottom of history. She therefore dwells not in the region of facts, but continually rises into the region of ideas"—of ideas which rule and have always ruled the world. The facts rightly viewed are a great store-house filled with treasures, all arranged in due order; but we want a key which shall open that store-house, and so make those treasures of practical value, and give us real satisfaction in the possession of them.

Now, it is very obvious that different minds will interpret the same facts differently. There is, of course, but one true key to the store-house. There is but one thread which runs through the labyrinth. But there are many false keys, and many threads of error and deceit. And different teachers of Church History will often present the philosophy of it in contrary aspects, and make the same facts tell an entirely opposite tale. There are, among Protestant writers of Church History, some Evangelical and some Rationalist; some Lutheran and some Calvinist or Reformed, and some Anglican; differing from one another in their treatment of the same persons, and the same doctrines, and the same events. Then, there are Roman Catholic Church historians, who vary from these all in their way of handling the very same matters. And then, also, occasionally an infidel takes up his pen to write *the Life of Jesus*, and not so much denying any of the facts of that life recorded in the Evangelists, as merely endeavoring to show that they were only *myths*, he labors to make out that "the cultivated intellect" presents us with this "dilemma: either Jesus was not really dead, or He did not really rise again;" and thus he would compel us either to acknowledge the death of Christ a mere syncope, or else his resurrection a mistake or fable. In our country we have not had as yet, and indeed for a long time, perhaps, we cannot be expected to have, many authors of Church History. Our greatest proficient in the study have, for the most part, thus far contented themselves with translating and editing, criticising and reviewing, the productions of foreign writers, or with lecturing on the subject in our Theological Schools. Nevertheless, we also, like the European Church Historians, are divided into various classes. There are amongst us as many interpretations of some of the facts of Church History as there are sects. Nor is there any possibility of its being otherwise, so long as we are divided in our views of doctrine; for a man's views in theology constitute the stand-point from which he regards the facts of Church History, so that his apprehension of those facts must be affected by the type of his doctrinal opinions. And so, on the other hand, a man's interpretation of the facts will always affect his

views of the doctrine. For this two-fold reason it is that we consider it essential to teach Church History for ourselves to our own rising ministry. We are convinced, if I apprehend correctly, my brethren, your position in the matter, that the true stand-point for rightly interpreting the facts of Church History, is that very doctrinal position which we, as a church, are occupying, so that Old-School Presbyterians, other things of course being equal, can better understand and explain the facts of Church History than any other class of men. And we are also convinced, that any other than the right interpretation of these facts is injurious to the soundness and integrity of theological opinions, so that we cannot transmit unimpaired our Old-School Presbyterian testimony to the generation that is to follow, if we do not furnish, for ourselves, to our rising ministry, that true key with which we have been entrusted, for unlocking the store-house of history.

Now, is this all mere sectarian bigotry? My brethren, doubtless these sentiments will, in the eyes of some, constitute us bigots. But they must then, also, call Neander a sectarian and a bigot, who distinctly expresses the same idea.

"It is pre-supposed," says Neander, vol. i, p. 1, "that we have formed some just conception of that in its inward essence which we would study in its manifestation and process of development. Our knowledge here falls into a necessary circle. To understand history, it is supposed that we have some understanding of that which constitutes its working principle; but it is also history which furnishes us the proper test, by which to ascertain whether its principle has been rightly apprehended. Certainly, then, our understanding of the history of Christianity will depend on the conception we have formed of Christianity itself." Guericke expresses the same idea when he tells us (p. 3) that "the phenomena (of Church History) must be unfolded genetically from their causes—primarily and chiefly from the innermost principle lying under all ecclesiastical phenomena." There is, then, an underlying principle, and each school of interpreters will form its own judgment of what that principle or doctrine is, and how it operates.

But Dr. Davidson, the Rationalist Professor of Church His-

tory amongst the English Dissenters, says that Guericke is "one sided,"—which means that he is a thorough and earnest believer in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and in the possibility of our comprehending in measure the truth they reveal, and of our expressing that truth in definite formularies of faith. Yet even Dr. Davidson's favorite Geiseler, whose Church History is a cold and dry skeleton,—invaluable, however, in this branch of study, just as the actual human skeleton is to the student of physiology—even Geiseler uses this language, "The ecclesiastical historian \* \* \* cannot penetrate into the internal character of the phenomena of Church History without a Christian religious spirit, because one cannot generally comprehend aright any strange spiritual phenomenon without reproducing it in himself." Even the cold, dry Geiseler, therefore, acknowledges that the external phenomena have an internal character, and that this internal character can only be comprehended by regarding those phenomena with a certain kind of spirit.

While, therefore, with Neander, I say that Church History "must not look through the glass of a particular philosophical or dogmatic school;" in other words, that she must be impartial and just in all her interpretations, I yet hold that every man will necessarily judge of all things, to some extent, from his own stand-point; and also, that there are principles running through the whole of Church History as its real life, insomuch that only those students who rightly apprehend them will be able to take the true and proper gauge and measurement of the facts that have chrySTALLIZED upon these principles as their thread.

This view of the necessity and value of just and true pre-conceptions respecting whatever we undertake to investigate, has been expressed by writers in other departments besides Church History. For example, MacCulloch, the Geologist, says well that the "work of the observation of facts cannot proceed without general principles—without theory. Not understood, facts are useless; not understood, they are not seen. He *who knows what to see, sees*; and without knowledge the man and the quadruped equally seeing, see to the same purpose." (Vol. II. p. 382.) Thus speaks the philosopher of nature. He means

to say that when we enter a very wide circle of particulars, we must have some general theory before hand, or we cannot generalize at all; and that where there are thousands of objects thrown before us in confusion, without the aid of some general pre-conceptions teaching us what to see, we shall not see at all. Just so it is in history—the man sees nothing who sees only the separate facts, and has before hand no principle around which to range them. The same thing say the philosophers of mind. Cousin holds that in all investigations, “as long as we have seized only isolated, disconnected facts; as long as we have not referred them to a general law, we possess the materials of science, but there is yet no science.” “To unite observation and reason—not to lose sight of the ideal of science to which man aspires, and to search for it and find it by the route of experience—such is the problem of philosophy.” Sir William Hamilton holds what Aristotle held before him, that it “is the condition of the possibility of knowledge that it does not regress to infinity, but departs from certain primary facts, beliefs, or principles—*ἀρχαί*, *principia*, literally ‘commencements,’ points of departure.” Now, if all knowledge is to be thus traced back to some few original beliefs—and if all facts depend upon some few of these primary principles, or seeds of things; if, as Sir William says, “the humble *Crede ut intelligas* of Anselm, and not the proud *Intellige ut credas* of Abelard,” be the correct rule of philosophic apprehension in respect to all knowledge, is it bigotry for us to maintain that right pre-conceptions of what Christianity itself is, are necessary to any right understanding of the history of Christianity?

Archer Butler, in his late beautiful exposition of Platonism, tells us that the ideas of Plato, about which innumerable critics have had so much to say, “are no other than the eternal laws and reasons of things.” “The essence of the theory of Plato (he says) is, that the whole conceivable universe is metaphysically divisible into Facts and Reasons, the objects of Experience and the objects of Intellect; with—as equally the ultimate point of both—that Supreme Essence, who is at once the greatest of facts and the most perfect of reasons, holding in Himself the solution of His own existence.” (Ancient

Philosophy, p. 129.) Thus, he says: "The object of Plato was to trace all that is offered by the senses throughout this wondrous world, down to its root in a deeper and invisible world, and to pronounce that the notion of perfect science is a delusion when it does not penetrate to this profounder reality," (p. 130.) Now, why may we not apply this to Church History, and say that just as there is a "profounder reality," which lies at the bottom of all that is offered by the senses, and which constitutes its root, so there is a profounder reality than all the facts of history which lies at their base? There is a principle, or there are various principles which, under God, are the causes of all the changes and events recorded by history, and whoever undertakes to learn these facts will fail, unless he have some correct understanding beforehand of these principles.

The position I am maintaining, so far from being the utterance of a stiff Presbyterian bigotry, has been very ably defended by Professor Shedd, of the Congregationalist Seminary at Andover. He says well, in his masterly Lectures on the Philosophy of History, "notwithstanding all professions to the contrary, every writer of ecclesiastical history, as well as of secular, has his own standing point and view-point. This can be inferred from the spirit and teachings of his work, as unmistakably as the position of the draughtsman can be inferred from the perspective of his picture." He says well, that "the true idea of any object is a species of preparatory knowledge, which throws light over the whole field of inquiry, and introduces an orderly method into the whole course of examination." He says, that "we have only to watch the movements of our minds to find that we carry with us, into every field of investigation, an antecedent idea, which gives more or less direction to our studies, and goes far to determine the result to which we come."

Lord Bacon (quoted by the same Professor) says, respecting the investigation of nature, "we must guide our steps by a clue, and the whole path from the very first perception of our senses must be secured by a determined method." "The sciences require a form of induction capable of explaining and separating experiments, and coming to a certain conclusion by a proper series of rejections and exclusions." Bacon (says

Shedd) often speaks of "rejections and exclusions in the investigation, as though there were a complexity, a mixture, and, to some extent, a contrariety in this domain." And most unquestionably, my brethren, Bacon was right. The facts of any science whatsoever, are they not like thousands of books laid down in great confused heaps upon the floor of some vast library hall, which you are required to arrange in due order upon the shelves standing around? Can you begin to arrange those mingled volumes of the works of different authors in various languages, and upon manifold subjects, unless you first form in your mind some plan, according to which you will arrange them, putting history here, and philosophy there, and poetry, and mathematics, and every other class of books in its own quarter of the room? And will there not always be some one plan of arrangement which, considering all the circumstances of the case, is the best and the true plan? "Opposed (says Shedd) as this sagacious and thoroughly English mind was to the unverified and mere conjectures of the fancy, such as the alchemists, *e. g.* employed in investigating nature, he was not opposed to the initiating ideas and pre-conceived methods of the contemplative scientific mind. The fictions of occult qualities and hidden spirits he rejected, but his own map of the great kingdom of nature, with his full list of *a priori* tests and capital experiments, to guide the inquirer through a region which he has not yet travelled over, and in which Bacon himself had entered only here and there by actual experiments and observation; this example of Bacon shows that he regarded the sober and watchful employment of the *a priori* method by the scientific mind, to be not only legitimate but necessary." Such a form of induction is needed in history, that the investigator may make the requisite "rejections and exclusions;" for whilst the mere chronicle gives you a miscellany of all that has happened, the science of history has a discriminating spirit.

Coleridge, (also quoted by Prof. Shedd,) says well, "We must, therefore, commence with the philosophic idea of the thing, the true nature of which we wish to find out and exhibit. We must carry our rule ready made, if we wish to measure

aright. If you ask me how I can know that this idea, my own invention and pre-conception, is the truth, by which the phenomena of history are to be explained, I answer: in the same way exactly that you know that your eyes were made to see with; and that is because you *do* see with them." \* \* \* \* "To set up for a philosophic historian upon the knowledge of facts only, is about as wise as to set up for a musician by the purchase of some score of flutes, fiddles and horns. In order to make music, you must know how to play; in order to make your facts speak truth, you must know what the truth is which *ought* to be proved."

It must therefore be admitted, that what we have said is not the utterance of bigotry, but of sober judgment and reason. We are bound to teach Church History for ourselves. Guericke is right when he says, that Church History is of the nature of commentary. It must, also, be admitted that, in order to any success in his undertaking, the teacher or writer of it must begin by holding right principles of dogmatic belief. I do not, of course, by any means assert that this is the only essential pre-requisite of success in teaching Church History. But I do insist that if you will include in this *holding* of right principles what indeed belongs to it, viz: the experimental knowledge and sense of them, then it is beyond comparison the most essential pre-requisite. Other needful qualifications are of great importance: as, a just and candid and honest mind; a docile humility; an untiring industry; powers of induction and of deduction, of analysis and of generalization; a competent knowledge of languages, of books and of men—that is, of human nature, which is ever one and the same the world over, and through all ages; a philosophic spirit; a sound and sober judgment; and a lively, enthusiastic delight in the studies of this department; but none of these is *absolutely indispensable*, like that one I have dwelt upon so long. You could be content to have in your Seminary a teacher of Church History and Polity possessed of some, or all, of these qualifications in but a moderate degree,—or else surely, brethren, you would never have elected me to this chair! But with that first and chief pre-requisite you could not be content to dispense at all. Your

Professor of Church History and Polity must have what you judge, in the fear of God, to be the right ideas of Christianity and of the Church.

Now, whence are these ideas to come? They are to come from the Scriptures. Church History is the record of a double development: a development of God's truth, and of the errors men have mixed with His truth. The written Word of God itself was slowly and gradually developed into its full proportions during a period of more than 4,000 years. And now, for a period of nearly half that length, the scheme of doctrines this Word of God contains, has been continually undergoing a process of development in the life and experience of the church. The ideas have for nearly 2,000 years all been there in the Book of God; but the Christian Church at first did not see them all. Gradually she learned more of these ideas, but continually she mixed errors with them,—whence arose controversies and disputes that rent her sore. One great cardinal set of truths, after another, was first the subject of general and wide-spread and often bitter discussion in the church, and then the true faith of God upon those points became settled and decided, and has so remained. Thus, on the whole, the truth more and more has been developed to the consciousness of the Church. Still, is it being so developed. And thus, no doubt, it is still to be developed hereafter. There are yet to be acquired, no doubt, new views of the truth contained in that Word of God; there are yet to be seen new relations of the old revealed ideas, and new aspects and bearings of them. There are yet to be, no doubt, higher and clearer and stronger developments of them to the faith and apprehension of God's children. And doubtless there are to be new admixtures of errors with them, and hence new controversies are to rise and disturb the peace of Zion for a time; still to result, however, in her learning more of the doctrine that is according to godliness. And then, we may suppose, when the whole development that was appointed from the beginning has been accomplished, the end of all things will have fully come, and the Church's education being complete, there shall have arrived the glad day of the public inaugura-

tion before the universe of her everlasting espousals with her Lord!

Respecting the development of these revealed ideas on the one hand, and of the false opinions of men upon the other, two things deserve to be considered. The first is, that in the development of the truth there has not been for two thousand years past, and there could not have been, any new, vital or fundamental ideas added to the system, as it stood when the New Testament Canon was closed. It was then the whole and complete Word of God, and not one line was thenceforth to be added to it or taken from it. And the second is, that every development of these ideas in the life and experience of the church—every aspect assumed by these ideas, and every relation and sequence ascribed to them in the doctrinal formularies of the church—was to be such as it might be easy to trace directly back to the Scriptures. “Thy Word is truth,” said the Saviour. None of the developments of error will stand when judged by these two Scriptural marks. Take, for example, the recently decreed Romish article of faith respecting the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. That idea was first broached in the twelfth century by Peter Lombard. In the thirteenth, Aquinas disputed the statement. In the fourteenth, Duns Scotus maintained it and gave it general currency. In the fifteenth, Sixtus IV, by a special edict, promised remission of sins to all who should keep the annual festival of the Immaculate Conception. For ages it was fiercely opposed by the Dominican Monks, but had the stout advocacy of the Franciscans. In the seventeenth century Popes Paul V, Gregory XV and Alexander VII, had great trouble with their disputes on this point; but, afraid of both the contending parties, in vain were they solicited by Philip III and Philip IV of Spain, to decide the question by a public decree. But now at length in our own day, seven centuries from the birth of the idea, it has been decreed at Rome, in the regular and constitutional way of that church, to be an article of faith! Well, this is certainly a notable development of doctrine! But we know it to be of false doctrine, because it neither can be traced directly back to

Scripture, nor is consistent at all with Scripture, while also it is the addition of new doctrine upon a fundamental point. It destroys the fullness of our Saviour's humiliation in being made of a woman; and it robs Him therefore of a part of His glory. Its design is indeed to complete that substitution of Mary for Jesus which the Church of Rome has been treacherously developing into mature fullness for long ages past. But take now, on the other hand, any one of those statements of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the person of Christ, which the six earliest general councils drew up as developments of truth in their times; or take any one of those anthropological statements received by the Church as the result of the controversies between Augustine and Pelagius; or take any one of the chief developments of evangelical doctrine made by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, and how easy it is to discover both that it presents nothing new upon any fundamental, doctrinal question, and, also, that it directly springs out of the Bible. Indeed, in respect to these last—to the developments of truth at the time of the Reformation, perhaps it might be more correct to call them *exhumations* than developments of doctrine. The Apostolic Church of Rome had buried those truths under mountains of lies; Luther, Calvin, and the other Reformers, only gave them resurrection.

Let me illustrate again by a reference to Chevalier Bunsen's Hippolytus. He maintains that Hippolytus, a Bishop of the Harbour of Rome, in the third century, and not Origen, is the real author of the book entitled "A Refutation of all Heresies," found in 1842, in the Greek Convent of Mount Athos, by a French Scholar, and in 1851 published by the University press of Oxford. And he undertakes to show what, supposing Hippolytus to have been the author of this newly discovered production of antiquity, were some of the matters believed by many now, which this Christian Bishop officiating near Rome itself, in the third century, did not know anything about. Bunsen accordingly enumerates the following developments of doctrine since the times of the third century, as all alike developments of *error*, viz:

"1. Hippolytus knew of no title to supremacy on the part of the Church of Rome, even in Italy;

“ 2. He knew of no sacred language used by the church in preference to the vernacular ;

“ 3. Nor anything of the celibacy of the clergy ;

“ 4. Nor of the Church of Christ being a Levitical-Priest-church ;

“ 5. Hippolytus therefore was no Papist ;

“ 6. Nor was he a Nicæan divine, much less an Athanasian ;

“ 7. Nor did he know anything of Pede-Baptism ;

“ 8. Nor did he teach original sin. At the same time we have no proof that he was a Pelagian. He would have raised many a previous question against both St. Augustine and Pelagius.

“ 9. He would have considered Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith, a quaint expression of a truth which he fully acknowledged.

“ 10. As to Calvin’s predestination, he would have abhorred it, without thinking less highly of God’s inscrutable counsels.

“ 11. Gaussen’s theory of plenary inspiration he would have considered a dangerous Jewish superstition.

“ 12. On the whole, if Hippolytus was no Papist, his divinity cannot be reduced to our Protestant formulas without losing all its native sense and beauty. There is nothing in his work which would contradict the general principles of evangelical doctrine—but as to the positive expressions he would not understand much of them. \* \* \* \* \* Without proceeding further, the absurdity of this whole method of understanding and judging the system of thought and doctrine of a Christian in the second and third centuries, by the conformity or non-conformity of his formulas with our own, must be self-evident. \* \* \* \* \* You cannot thus find out the real truth. You are out of the centre of the man and of his age.”

Now, it is evident enough that, unless we put ourselves in the same centre with Hippolytus and his age, we cannot understand him nor it. But it is not so evident that we are not at liberty, to a certain extent, to judge of the system of thought and doctrine of Hippolytus by the conformity or non-conformity of his formulas with our own. The centre of true Christians in

all ages is the same, and therefore they must move to a very great extent in one and the same circle. Their common centre is Christ. The Scriptures are to them all, in proportion as they are enlightened, the source of ideas and principles; and in proportion as they are not enlightened, of course it is doubtful if they are Christians, because Christianity is light. There has been in the Church of Christ a development of ideas, but it is not of any fundamental ideas that were not written with the finger of inspiration on the pages of the Bible. There has been a development of new aspects and relations, new dependencies and sequences of those old written truths, but there has been nothing developed in the life and to the consciousness of the real Church of God, which could not be traced back directly to the Scriptures. Try the twelve developments which Bunsen falsely alleges to be all alike errors, by these two rules, and if you are candid and docile, and if, moreover, we must add, it be given you to know the doctrine of God, you shall quickly be able to judge betwixt them. And so with any true child of God, in any age, if he had the Bible in his hand! No sooner had any one of these twelve points come into discussion in the visible church, than it was quite possible for all who were taught of the Spirit, and had the Scriptures in their vernacular, to know the truth respecting it. In the progress of years, therefore, new questions must constantly be expected to arise, and the old truths to stand in new relations, and thus a development that is healthful and useful to go forwards continually for the enlightenment of those who are without and for the church's edification; but as to all the main doctrines of the Gospel, it may well be questioned whether, in this nineteenth century, we receive them in any greater fullness, simplicity or integrity, than the true children of God (having corresponding advantages) have received them in all times. The Bible—the Theology of the Bible—the Evangelical Doctrine is not the vague, uncertain thing Bunsen would represent it, incapable of being clearly and distinctly comprehended. No, it is and always has been something definite, something fixed and positive. And this Book of God, and the pre-conceptions which it gives us respecting the being and attributes of the Triune

God; respecting His counsels and His purposes and His government; respecting man's creation and probation and fall; respecting the Church given of God to His Redeeming Son; respecting the ordinances and the promises, the officers, the powers and the work given to this Church; respecting the future glories that are to be revealed in her and to her—this wondrous Book of God, I say, with these wondrous ideas it furnishes to us, this is the key of History—this the innermost principle and profounder life of the whole course of events—this the interpreter of the multiform, the confused, often the contradictory chronicles of a thousand scribes.

So much, my brethren, I have deemed it proper for me to express on this occasion respecting Church History. It would seem necessary I should add a few words respecting Church Polity.

We hear it often said now that this is the field of religious enquiry for our period—that first Theology was developed in the life and to the consciousness of the Church—then Anthropology—next Soteriology; and that now, at last, Ecclesiology is being developed. To a certain extent I think this correctly said. For, what are the religious questions of our time? They are:

1. Our controversy with skeptical criticism, which would overthrow the inspiration of the sacred *writings* by affirming inspiration of the sacred *writers*, only however, as all men of genius are inspired; which would make human reason the *a priori* judge of Divine Revelation; which would undertake to eliminate all that is human out of the Christian Scriptures, and which reduces to myth or legend, or allegory, whatsoever in the Divine records is unpalatable to its own taste.

2. Our controversy with ontology in that transcendental, pantheistic form of it, which instead of investigating being by the legitimate use of the human powers, undertakes to shew by metaphysics how the universe must have been evolved out of the absolute—how the infinite becomes real in the finite—how One is made All, and All are made One,—how God alone exists, and all things in the universe are but His phenomena.

3. Our controversy with the physical sciences, as in the

hands of some of their dévotées, they turn against the Christian Scriptures and seek to destroy their credibility.

All these controversies together form the battle ground, in our day, of the evidences of Christianity—the battle outside and against the citadel itself. These are our contests with the enemies of all revelation. But besides these questions, there are various subjects of controversy amongst the professors of the Christian faith themselves; and, perhaps, it may be said, that of these the most earnestly debated do relate in some way or other to the doctrine of the Church. It is now (as indeed to some extent it always has been) *their Church and her Sacraments* that Roman Catholics are holding forth and pressing forwards every where with a new zeal. It is not so much any abstract dogma as it is their visible Hierarchy and Ritual, their Cathedrals and pompous Liturgies, their Nunneries of women devoted to the service of the Church, their Sisters of Mercy recommending the charity of the Church, their schools illustrating the Church's love of knowledge and of light;—these are the contrasts which they seem anxious to set forth and make manifest between their Church and the cold, naked, barren, dry sects of Protestantism. And then what they deny to us is not so much the true doctrine as the true Church. We might even maintain what they would call false doctrine, if we would but acknowledge their Church to be the only true Church and the Pope its head. The unity they most earnestly cherish is this external unity. The most important differences of doctrine they know how to tolerate when necessary, if only there is external submission to the Pope. But we do not thus submit to the Pope. We renounce his and their communion—and so they declare that we have no Church at all, and no Sacraments at all. On the other hand, the aspect of Rome in Protestant eyes, is more and more that of an Apostate church. Protestants, who are thoughtful and earnest, more and more agree in denying altogether to Rome the possession of the ordinances as well as of the doctrines of the gospel. John Calvin did not deny the validity of Romish Baptism. But our Assembly, and probably our Church generally, denies that their baptism is Christian baptism any more than their Mass is the

Lord's Supper. And this appears to be the tendency of opinion amongst all real Protestants in America. The extended and complete hierarchy of Romish Priests and Bishops, which has grown up in the midst of us; their pompous worship challenging the popular gaze; their monastic system for females as well as for males; their educational schemes to entrap Protestant youth; their foreign teachers and preachers selected of the very best which the Romish Church any where in Europe can produce; the allegiance due from every one of their clergy at least, to a foreign despot; the spacious religious edifices they are at vast expense erecting at all important points throughout the country; their seemingly exhaustless pecuniary resources brought from foreign lands; their proselyting zeal; their manifest use of our political hucksters to serve their own ends, and the evident readiness of a large portion of our secular press and of our politicians to curry favor with them; their growing confidence and arrogance with respect to their winning this Western Continent for the seat of their power which has long been and is still threatened with overthrow in the old world; their virulent abusiveness in controversy with Protestants; their uncompromising bigotry, which gives over to destruction every Christian believer even, except he will exclusively acknowledge their church and her Pope; all these things, looked at now with considerable care for thirty years past, during which Rome has been so rapidly developing her strength in this country, have at length produced among all American Protestants who deserve the name, a calm but an intelligent and profound abhorrence of that system, especially as a visible, living, active organization. Not the theology—not the abstract doctrines of Rome so much as *the Church of Rome*; that church in its relation to other churches,—to all Protestant churches; that church denying to all others any right to be, and not very equivocally manifesting that they should not be, had she now power to hinder; this we conceive to be the particular aspect in which Protestant America regards the Romish development amongst us with such an intense interest.

In like manner British Protestants are looking very earnestly

now at these ecclesiological questions, having beheld clergymen of the Established Church, some of them of great eminence, renounce their Protestant orders and go to Rome for better. Perhaps these losses are more than made up to Protestantism, both in England and in Ireland, by the conversion of Roman Catholics. Whether they be so or not, there is unquestioned, far more earnestness, both with Romanists and Protestants in Great Britain, about the question of the Church. If the German mind be less roused by this controversy than the British, it is perhaps because questions of philology and metaphysics pre-occupy it. Of the church controversy as to France, I say nothing, because we are all waiting outside of France, as within doubtless, also, to see what will come forth religiously and politically of the strange, unexpected, inexplicable condition of their public affairs. Not only is Protestantism pent up there, but the mighty spirit of the nation is pent up likewise—pent up probably only to explode with proportionate violence. The position of things there is anomalous. France herself is an anomaly—a mystery, and yet a lesson of profound instruction.

But leaving the questions which divide Protestants and Roman Catholics, what divides the Protestants of Great Britain amongst themselves? It is questions of dissent and of conformity with the Establishment. And what divides the Establishment itself? It is questions still about the Church between the Anglicans and what they call the Ultra-Protestants. Pass to the Episcopalians of this country, and they are very much engaged in the discussion of church questions. Amongst Congregationalists, there is unquestionably a firmer and more earnest faith in their distinctive views of church polity. No “plan of union” between them and us would now be a possibility on their side any more than on ours. Even our New-School brethren are hardly able now to agree with our Congregational brethren in this “plan of union.” Questions of church-order disturb even their foreign missions, composed of Congregationalists and Presbyterians. With our Baptist brethren the increase of denominational zeal is exceedingly manifest. Some of them exhibit a strong tendency to deny

that Pædo-Baptist Societies are any churches at all. On our part there is, we believe, a stronger and clearer development of the primitive doctrine of the church-membership of infants. There is also amongst us an increasing sense of the essentially schismatic position of both Baptists and High Church Episcopalians; of the former, for rending the body of Christ about baptism—of the latter, for rending it about ordination. Then as to the Methodist Episcopal Church, there is begun amongst them, too, a serious and a slowly growing question of the church, which relates to the absence of any representation of the people in their Conference. This question has already produced the Protestant Methodist Church, consisting in 1843 of 22 annual conferences and 1,300 ministers, opposed to the absolute committal of all church property, as well as power, into the hands of a body of clergymen alone.

Leaving, again, these various questions amongst the different denominations, we might refer to the Millenarian controversy which is more or less earnestly carried on in this country and Great Britain and Switzerland, and to some slight extent even in Germany. This is a question about the meaning of prophecy—but of prophecy respecting the Church. The Millenarian controversy may be said therefore to belong to Ecclesiology, inasmuch as it discusses whether Christ is to appear personally in a short time to reign with His Saints over the earth as His Kingdom, overthrowing and destroying all apostate churches—or whether the present dispensation is to continue to the end of the world and the day of judgment.

Perhaps we might also say that the question of slavery, so largely discussed during thirty years past, has been, in respect to its most important bearings, a question of Ecclesiology. For never did they touch bottom in that discussion until they enquired whether slaveholding is sinful and must be made a matter of Church discipline. Wherever these simple questions have been decided in the negative, the battle of the slaveholder has been won—the fight has immediately become a conflict, not with him but with Christianity and the Bible, and the struggle has been transferred from the field of Ecclesiology to that of the Evidences.

The same is true of the controversy of total abstinence and some others like it. The settlement of this question upon Scripture principles has determined the true limits of Church power, as well as defined the true nature of the Christian virtue of temperance.

Thus it would seem to be true to a considerable extent, that the question of our age is, *the Church*, her nature, her mission, her functions, her powers, her officers, her members. The question is not about points of abstract doctrine, nor questions of systematic divinity; but points of church-order, church-office, church-powers, church-membership, church-work, church-discipline.

Of the position of our own Church in all these discussions, brethren, we have no reason to be ashamed. Only let us well beware that we glory not except in the truth which is given to us to hold. We stand up, on the one hand, for the liberties of the Church of Christ, as they are invaded by Popes and Prelates; and, on the other, we stand up for the powers of Church Rulers as they are invaded by ecclesiastical radicalism. The King of Zion has given her a government which, on the one hand, allows no place for tyranny by any independent order of men, but which, on the other hand, creates offices of rule, and attaches power to those offices. We stand in the safe and true middle between these extremes of error. So, too, we occupy no extreme and no narrow ground respecting Christ's members. We receive all members whom we believe He receives. We sit down at the supper-table here with all whom we expect to sit down with at the supper-table above. And we acknowledge all ministers whom we believe He calls and acknowledges; that is, in other words, we acknowledge every ministry which any true church of the Lord calls and ordains. And we acknowledge as a true church, every church which holds the Head, viz: Christ;—every church where the Word is preached and the Sacraments administered in their integrity. The Presbyterian Church is often called a church of bigots, and John Calvin, one of her great lights, the prince of bigots. But whoso reads his immortal Institutes discovers the extreme candor, liberality and moderation which con-

stantly accompanied the stern honesty of that Reformer. And the Presbyterian Church is Catholic enough to adopt his Catholic language on this point. "The preaching of the Word," says Calvin, "and the observance of the Sacraments, cannot anywhere exist without producing fruit and prospering by the blessing of God. \* \* \* There the face of the church appears without deception or ambiguity, and no man may, with impunity, spurn her authority or reject her admonitions, or resist her councils, or make sport of her censures, far less revolt from her unity. For such is the value which the Lord sets on the communion of His Church, that all who contumaciously alienate themselves from any Christian society in which the true ministry of His Word and Sacraments is maintained, He regards as deserters of religion." (Book IV, cap. I, § 10). And he adds, "We may safely recognize a church in every society in which both exist. We are never to discredit it so long as these remain, though it may otherwise teem with numerous faults. Nay, even in the administration of the Word and Sacraments, defects may creep in which ought not to alienate us from its communion. For all the heads of true doctrine are not in the same position. I have no wish to patronize even the minutest errors, as if I thought it right to foster them by flattery or connivance; what I say is, that we are not, on account of every minute difference, to abandon a church, provided it retains sound and unimpaired, that Doctrine in which the safety of piety consists, and keep the use of the Sacraments instituted by the Lord. Meanwhile, if we strive to reform what is offensive, we act in the discharge of duty." (Ibid, § 12.)

Inasmuch, then, my brethren, as I am not ashamed of the position of the Presbyterian Church in relation to this question of the age, let me endeavor to enquire precisely and distinctly what is that position. What do we hold about the Church question? What are our radical principles of church government? There is a note, p. 425 of our Book, which sets forth that the radical principles of Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline are—that the several different congregations of believers taken collectively, constitute one Church of Christ,

called emphatically *the Church*; that a larger part of the Church, or a representation of it, should govern a smaller; that in like manner a representation of the whole should govern every part—that is, that a majority should govern; and consequently that appeals may be carried from lower to higher judicatories. Now, this unity of the whole church in one body which governs its several parts, and governs them by majorities, and governs by courts of appeal—these several principles certainly are among our radical principles of church government. But they are evidently not all the principles which we hold to be fundamental. The following may surely be added:

1. The Headship and Kingship of Christ. This involves the church's being free of the State—and to be governed by the spiritual officers appointed by her King. This is a principle of the ancient Church which Calvin in Geneva first exhumed from its burial place—which our Mother Church in Scotland, receiving it from him through John Knox, testified to with her blood and transmitted to us—but which thousands of Protestants, in England especially, have never yet received.

2. The State's freedom of the church, and the freedom of the individual conscience. In this country Presbyterians have long known what even in Scotland they have yet but partially learned, that a union of Church and State necessarily involves the inevitable subjection of one of these two parties under the sway and power of the other. American Presbyterians wish to see neither of them subject to the other, but both moving freely in their respective orbits. They wish, also, to see every man held responsible, so far as any legal penalty is concerned, only to God for his religious opinions. Mankind have been as slow to learn this as they have many other things equally plain to us in this age and country.

3. The parity of Bishops on the one hand, and on the other hand:

4. The distinction between Bishops or Elders who teach *and* rule, and Bishops or Elders who rule *only*. It is this distinction which gives us our name of "the Presbyterian Church"—the

Church that holds to government by elders, the essence of whose office is ruling, and not teaching.

5. The right of the people to choose their own rulers.

6. The right of the chosen rulers to govern the people.

It is all these Divinely revealed principles of church government taken together, which, co-operating with the doctrines of a sound theology, make the Presbyterian Church what she is. It is these principles which separate her from lax, disjointed Congregationalism on the one hand, and from tyrannic Prelacy or Popery on the other. It is these principles which set forth that beautiful system revealed in the Scriptures of a Head of the Church, who is, at the same time, one with His members—who gave them their freedom and their rights, and at the same time imposed on them duties of submission to him, and to one another, and to the whole body. It is these principles which make the Presbyterian Church so eminently conservative in her temper, and yet so able to sympathise with the spirit of the age, in respect to every kind of real and true progress and improvement. It is these principles which make her at once the supporter of good and just government, and yet a lover of true and real liberty; at once the defender of necessary, wholesome, righteous restraint, yet the advocate of freedom, regulated and enlightened. It is these principles which influence her to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and yet to deny to Cæsar the things that are God's. I do not say that Presbyterians have always acted up to their principles; that would, perhaps, be too much to assert of any good men. But I do say that their heaven-descended principles have always been their ornament and strength. I glorify not the men but the principles. The men have never dishonored themselves except when they have dishonored their principles!

There are some other principles of Presbyterian Church government, taking the term in a wide sense, not so fully developed amongst ourselves as those to which I have just alluded, but more or less generally received, and, as I suppose, constantly

gaining ground amongst us ; and of which I will proceed to speak briefly, by way of publicly expressing on this occasion my own adherence to them.

Of these, the first I shall mention is plainly enunciated in the Scriptures, and in our Confession of Faith, and is, also, distinctly mentioned in our Form of Government and Directory for worship ; and yet it has but lately been developed at all distinctly or generally in the life and practice of our Church. It is that giving is a grace—a fruit of grace—a sign of grace—a means of grace ; that offerings of money for pious purposes are acts of worship to be systematically performed in every church and by every Christian. This is a principle essential to the full and complete fellowship of the Saints, for many of the members of the Lord's body are of the poor and afflicted. How conspicuous was this lovely grace amongst the shining virtues of the primitive church, everywhere recommending her to the nations that had never seen amongst men any care for the poor and needy as such—never had beheld any such institutions as the hospital or the asylum ! This principle still possesses the utmost vigor and force. It is destined by God's grace, as it shall, more and more, simply be *held up* by faithful ministers before a believing people, to work wonders of beneficence. It has a vital power which is superior to all mere schemes and plans and expedients for collecting money. My brethren ! what is needed in the church respecting the whole matter of funds is not more machinery, nor, indeed, so much ; but it is more *power of life*, which always comes from the Spirit by the truth ! When the true doctrine about giving shall be fully developed in the church, you will not need to have your Society for the Relief of Superannuated Ministers and their destitute families, nor indeed societies for any similar purpose. The church will, herself, attend to this duty ; each particular church will do her duty in every such case, and will do it directly and spontaneously. Let us then simply but earnestly hold up to the church's apprehension the truth that giving is a grace, for it will have power with the church, the like of which no machinery can have. And more than this, it has

power with God, for God loveth a cheerful giver, and accepts the offerings of our substance, and is able to make all grace abound toward us.

Another principle of Presbyterian Church government, in the wide sense of the term, which comparatively of late has begun to be acknowledged among us, is, that the Church is of necessity a Missionary institution. The first Protestant Reformers, hard pressed on all sides by dangers and by difficulties at home, seem not to have had time to think of the heathen. Even Calvin, in treating of the Evangelist's office, makes not the slightest allusion to the subject of propagating the faith abroad, and so does not in any way identify the Evangelist of primitive times with the foreign missionary of our own. Yet Calvin is said to have taken part with Coligny in sending missionaries from Geneva to Brazil; and if so, his otherwise illustrious name ought to be held in still greater esteem, because thus associated with the very first missionary efforts of a renovated Christianity. For a long time the Presbyterians of this country were content to do their feeble part in Foreign Missions through the agency of our Congregational brethren. Now, however, it is their universal sentiment that this is a work not for a mere association of individuals, but for the Church as such. The same is now held by us all as to Domestic Missions and the Education of Ministers. These are works of the Church in her Church capacity. Her courts must superintend these operations as part of their regular duty when met together. We have no need of any outside associations, and we have no right to resort to them. The church is competent to do these things herself, and is required by her Lord to do them herself, not to *assist another body* to do them.

Upon this point we are all agreed. Some go still further, however, and I confess I go with them, and maintain that the church is required to do these things herself, and not to *appoint another body* to do them. I would express myself on this moot question with becoming modesty. I honor the many respected brethren from whom I differ, for their superior wisdom and knowledge, and their greater advances in the Divine life. On this public occasion, however, when I am providen-

tially called on, and am by you expected to speak out and tell what are my sentiments and views upon all matters of Church polity, I feel constrained to say frankly what I believe on this particular point. It does seem to me, then, that our Church is not herself doing her own works of foreign and domestic missions and of education, but *appoints other bodies* to do these things. I call them *bodies* because they have the form and the constitution which make an organized body of men—their Presidents and Vice-Presidents, and their Executive or Prudential Committees, and if I do not greatly mistake, their Honorary Members and Honorary Directors, precisely as any voluntary society in all the land. I deny that there is any necessity of appointing these *other bodies* to do these works of the church, because a simple Committee, or better still, a Commission of the General Assembly—perpetuated from year to year that it might acquire experience and character, and reporting directly to the Assembly—a Commission not composed of a score or two of prominent ministers and elders scattered over the whole land, unable ever to assemble together, compelled actually, after all, to *commit* their work to a Committee, and so never performing themselves any real service at all, but only vouchsafing to the cause the use of their honorable names and titles—a Commission, located in some one neighborhood so that really and in *bona fide* it might meet and do the work committed to it,—such a mere Commission would be both more efficient and also more in harmony with our system. In the case of our own Seminary, which is the creature of several Synods, inasmuch as no simple Committee or Commission could represent these Synods, we do need and must have a Board of Directors, which is made up of joint Commissions of the various Synods, to which, of necessity, the direction of the institution is referred from time to time by the Synods. If this Seminary belonged to one Synod, we would need no such compound organization of our Board of Directors. The General Assembly is one body and has no partner. That Assembly can therefore do its work very simply and very efficiently, without recourse to any compound organization whatsoever, and still more without recourse to any outside

organization. These outside bodies are of no good use therefore at all, and only operate to hinder the free passage of the sympathies of the church from her own bosom directly to her missionaries and missions, and the return of their appeals and their influence back again to her heart and her affections. And then they are a relic of our old Congregationalist bondage—in fact, a piece of Congregationalist machinery—an institution not known to our Book, and an excrescence upon our system.

These, however, are by no means the weightiest objections I have to the present mongrel system. That we must have a central agency of some sort to conduct these general operations of the church, cannot be denied. But is it not utterly preposterous to imagine that any such agency (whether it be a simple or a complex one) located at any centre, can superintend the work of domestic missions or of education in the bounds of all our established Presbyteries? Moreover, is it not the constitutional right and the necessary duty of every Presbytery, as it is of every Session, to cultivate its own field? The domestic missions of our church, I conceive, require a Central Committee only for the purpose of equalizing the resources of the richer and of the poorer Presbyteries, and of carrying on the work on the frontiers. It should be the earnest and determined effort of every Presbytery to overtake the necessities of its own immediate field, and to have likewise an annual surplus for domestic missions to send on to the Assembly's Committee. And there is such vigor and life in the Divine "grace of giving," that nearly every Presbytery which earnestly makes this attempt in the right way, will, by the blessing of God, succeed in it. We are not straitened in our Head nor in His people. Let them but have their duty set before them, and by His grace they will exert themselves and do it. What is needful in the matter of external arrangements is to apply power where it will be most efficient. If a Central Committee or Board cannot, in the nature of things, engage the attention of the people, nor give their own attention either, to the necessities of every separate and individual portion of the field so well as the Presbyteries can—if such a central agency cannot, in the nature of

things, even *know* the wants of each particular subdivision of the field so well as can the Presbyteries which severally have the oversight thereof; it seems to be evident that the work of domestic missions can never be thoroughly and efficiently carried on in all our established Presbyteries by any Committee or Board in any centre. Our domestic missionary plans and arrangements would be but one degree more absurd and preposterous than they are now, if we were to undertake to carry on by a central Committee or Board, our Church's work in the bounds of every particular church session.

There is only one more point about which I shall say any thing, and that is the true nature of the Ruling Elder's office. Upon this topic there is some difference of opinion in our Church. One view of the nature of this office makes the ruling elders just *assistants of the minister* in the church which they both serve. They have other duties, indeed, belonging to them as members of the various church courts, but there also, according to this view, they are still only assistants of the ministers. They rule with the ministers; they help the ministers to rule. A leading authority says: "It is clear that a Presbytery, in the sense of our Book, is a body of ministers regularly convened, in which ruling elders have a right to deliberate and vote as members;" "the Presbytery often means the body of ministers who are its standing members without including the delegated, any more than the corresponding members who may happen to be present." (Bib. Rep. 1843, p. 438.) Accordingly it is held, that the right of ruling elders to appear along with the ministers in these courts, depends on their being the representatives of the people. They appear in the church courts not in virtue of their being rulers, but in virtue of the people's having delegated to them the right of representing them there, and as assistants to the ministers who alone are full and complete members thereof by inherent right of office.

The other view, and I think the true view of the nature of this office, makes the ruling elder to be the *aboriginal* Presbyter, and makes the essence of the Presbyterate to be *ruling*. It makes the overseers or bishops of the church at Ephesus,

whom Paul summoned to Miletus, to be ruling elders. It makes the description which Paul gives to Timothy of the bishop relate to the ruling elder. It makes those whom Titus ordained in every city, ruling elders, in distinction from teaching elders. It denies that presbyter and preacher were originally synonymous; but views preaching as a function,\*—a *charisma* (or gift) as Neander expresses it, which came to be superadded to certain of the Rulers. They had suitable talents, and so were chosen and called to that work. Beginning with the elders of Israel, in the days of Moses, and coming down to the elders of the synagogue after the return from Babylon; and thence still further descending to the elders or presbyters or bishops or pastors of the New Testament, this view finds them always to be *rulers* in distinction from *teachers*. And scrutinizing carefully the testimonies of the Apostolic fathers also, and of the primitive church, this view finds the presbyter, or the elder in the early church, to be simply a ruler and a shepherd of Christ's flock. But it also discovers very early the working of the mystery of iniquity. It discovers how very soon the name of Bishop came to be appropriated to the teaching elder only, and how these teachers began to grow so great as to crowd down the mere rulers. It discovers also how subsequently these ruling elders caught the same spirit of ambition. Then it was that ruling elders, who had been allowed occasionally in the absence of the teaching bishop to instruct the people, coveting the especial honor awarded by Paul to elders who labored also in the Word, claimed the right of preaching as officially their own. Presbyters learning to despise mere ruling eldership, and along with even deacons, pushing themselves up into preachers, bishops soon found

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\*It was, however, a function of greater and wider influence and power, of course, than the *charisma* of government, and for this reason it was afterwards coveted by many ambitious rulers to whom the Lord had not given it. His will and pleasure was, that along with Ministers of His Word and Sacraments, there should always be in His Church a class of Rulers most directly and immediately connected with the people, to the end that the government might always remain *popular* rather than *hierarchical*.

means to advance themselves into prelates,—to drop preaching and to assume the discarded power of rule on a new and grand scale! They became rulers of dioceses that were rich and extensive provinces! Out of these Diocesan Bishops grew Arch-Bishops, Metropolitans and Patriarchs, until at last the Pope was developed, full grown and monstrous, the usurper of Christ's sole Headship of His Church, assuming to be God's vice-gerent in the whole earth!

It is obvious that this view of the office of the ruling elder, so far from merging that office into the Ministry of the Word, distinctly separates it from that Ministry, and shews plainly wherein the ruling elder is inferior to the teacher. He is inferior to him in respect to the Word and Sacraments. Paul says, that a bishop (or ruling elder) must be "apt to teach," but not because the duty of public instruction belongs officially to him. He teaches, indeed, from house to house, and he teaches also, whenever in the church courts he helps, either by advice or by mere voting, to make the deliverance of the body which decides some question of doctrine or order. And he must, therefore, be an intelligent man, qualified to disseminate the truth he learns from the teaching eldership, and from the Word of God. Yet he is not himself a teacher, but simply a ruler in God's house.

At the same time this view gives a very definite character to our church courts. It gives those courts the very character in which they are set forth in our Confession of Faith, chap. xxxi. "For the better government and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such Assemblies as are commonly called Synods or Councils, and *it belongeth to the overseers and other rulers* of the particular churches, by virtue of their office, and the power which Christ hath given them for edification and not destruction, to appoint such Assemblies, and *to convene together in them* as often as they shall judge it expedient for the good of the church." So far is it from being "the sense of our Book," that in these courts the complete and regular members are ministers, while the elders are only admitted for a particular purpose, and on a special ground—that, on the contrary preachers or teachers, *as such*, have indeed no place at

all in them! They are assemblies of ruling elders, many of whom have the superadded *charisma* of preaching, but all of whom belong to the order of rulers. These courts are not "bodies of ministers," nor yet bodies of ministers with certain "delegates of the people" *admitted to sit with them* upon some special principle, such as that which admits "corresponding members." But both the ministers and the elders appear in that body as rulers—the one class having precisely the same right to be there as the other. The government appointed by the Lord for His Church is based throughout upon the principle of representation, and "sets them to rule who are most esteemed in the House of God." From the very beginning this principle of representation has always had place in the government of God's people. Both the Patriarchal and the Mosaic constitutions were based upon it. And it is essential to all right conceptions of the Church Government of the New Testament. Accordingly all the acts of our church courts are acts of the church through her *representatives*, and her representatives are those whom *she has chosen to rule and govern her*. Our church is not governed by officers having only such powers as the people possess, or as the people bestow, and assembling to do only what the people might themselves do, or what the people have instructed them to do; but she is governed by officers whose powers come from the Lord who instituted the office—by officers whom the people freely elect, and then must obey—by officers to whom the consideration and the determination of all the affairs of the church are, under God, committed for absolute decision by them. Nor, on the other hand, is our church governed by a hierarchy in any form, even the most qualified. Her officers that rule over her are not priests, any more than is every member of the Christian brotherhood a priest. She is not ruled even by a body of *ministers alone*, but constantly it is provided that there shall be the presence, and the complete jurisdiction also, of ruling elders—elders of the people, coming as directly as possible from amongst the people, and as directly as possible representing them; and, moreover, it is provided, that the ministers themselves shall only appear among the rulers or representatives because **they**

are themselves also rulers or representatives. Such is the representative government which the Lord has given to His Church. Her ministers are her representatives, for none of them ordinarily is ordained except upon her call. She must choose them, and they appear in all the courts as *chosen* by her. It is as being a Ruler that we meet the minister in the session. The particular church governed by that session has chosen and called him to be her pastor and her shepherd, to feed and guide, and direct and rule her; and, accordingly, she is bound to obey him in the Lord. When the various sessions of a particular district are associated together in a Presbytery, or in a Synod, then do all the ministers appear there respectively *as the chosen rulers of the several churches*, governed by that Presbytery or that Synod. And when that Presbytery sends delegates to the General Assembly, it is from amongst these ministers who have all *been chosen for rulers by the church*, that she through that Presbytery sends some to represent her in that highest of her courts. In like manner her elders are her representatives. When our Book says (chap. v): "Ruling elders are properly the representatives of the people," it proceeds immediately to add, by way of explanation of this term, "*chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline.*" They are representatives of the people, because they are *chosen rulers* of the people; and the Book says they are "properly such representatives," because they are *nothing more* than such representatives, or chosen rulers, and do not, like ministers, have the function, also, of laboring in the Word, and administering the Sacraments. Perhaps the Book says they are "properly" or specifically representatives of the people, for the reason, also, that not every elder in any district may be a member of Presbytery; but by conventional arrangement, for the sake of putting the feeble churches in some necessary and just degree on a level with the strong ones in their mutual government, it is provided that each session shall send one elder only with the minister, to *represent that session*, and so to represent that church or people.

This view of the elder's office, I am free to confess, brethren, I find in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and in

the history of the Primitive Church. I find it revived in the writings of Calvin, and in the Discipline of the Scotch Church. Our General Assembly did, indeed, decide against this view, both in 1843 and 1844; but there is considerable reason to believe that the opinions of very many who acted with those Assemblies, have been considerably modified in the course of the fifteen years that have since passed. It may be well doubted if a General Assembly would now decide that way. Certain it is, as I conceive, that great good came out of that controversy. We never hear now of what formerly sometimes occurred, viz: that "a minister in Presbytery moving for a committee would suggest that, as the business was important, and required direct action, the better course would be not to appoint any ruling elder." Our ruling elders are not the cyphers they were, when "for a long period there can be found in the records of our highest courts no instance of a ruling elder ever being appointed on a Committee."

But, brethren, whatsoever difference in views may still exist amongst us on this subject, there is one point relating to it on which we all agree, and that is, that the church needs better ruling elders. We ministers come far short of our own duty, and must confess ourselves very unfaithful, as well as very incompetent. The church wants better preachers than most of us can pretend to be. We all have reason to lament our numerous imperfections. But, brethren, the church can ask, and could receive from her Head, no better blessing than a ruling eldership thoroughly qualified for their work, and truly faithful in it! When He ascended up on high, He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists. These were extraordinary officers, that do not belong to a settled state of the church. Then he gave, also, for ordinary officers, some Pastors and Teachers. I do not say the office of rule is superior, nor yet in every respect even equal to that of instruction; but I say the Holy Spirit here names it first: "Some pastors and teachers." And I feel warranted in saying, that in this settled Church State which our lot is to enjoy, the Lord himself has no better blessing to give us in the shape of a human instrumentality, than a ruling eldership after His own heart.

My brethren, you are looking to the Seminary, under God, to furnish you a better article of preachers. God help us to do faithfully the solemn and responsible duty committed to us! To what quarter amongst men will you look to get a better article of elders? You must look to the faithful labors of ministers in training better the rising generation of disciples, and in holding up to ruling elders a full and complete view of all their duties. But you are also to look to a true testimony by our church courts respecting the nature of this office. There prevails amongst us too low a conception of what the office is, and what it involves. The ruling elder is not a mere assistant of the minister. He is a high spiritual officer in Christ's house. He is a shepherd of the blood-bought flock. He rules in Emanuel's kingdom. He is a judge in the courts of the Lord. Sitting in that court he has committed to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven—and as he binds or looses on earth, it is bound or loosed in heaven! (See Calvin's Institutes, Vol. III, p. 280.)

If it be objected by any that there is danger of exciting in the eldership a spirit of vain glory by the expression of such views as these, and that in some cases even now, because possessed of wealth or station in society, elders lord it over their minister, and are dictatorial and domineering, I need only, by way of reply, quote (with a slight alteration) John Owen's words, who says, "let them remember on the other hand how, upon the confinement of power and authority unto the bishops of the church, they have changed the nature of church power and enlarged their usurpation, until the whole rule of the church issued in absolute tyranny. Wherefore, no fear of consequents that may ensue and arise from the darkness, ignorance, weakness, lusts, corruptions or secular interests of men, ought to entice us unto the least alteration of the rule (or government) by any prudential provisions of our own."—*Owen on the true nature of a Gospel Church*—Works, Vol. XX, p. 504.

Suffer me, then, by way of enforcing all I have said, to draw a plain, unvarnished, faithful picture of the real state of the case in our church as respects this office.

There are some ruling elders to whom does not apply what I

am about to utter very frankly, respecting their class generally. Many however are utterly unacquainted with our system of doctrine and order. They do not know what the Book contains, whose laws and rules they are to administer. They have never carefully studied the Confession of Faith, the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline, nor the Directory for Worship. Perhaps they have never read them once through consecutively, and compared them with the Scriptures! The consequence of this, and other failings and imperfections, is that, when assembled in the session, they are entirely dependent on the minister, and must succumb to his judgment in every case. They take no independent part in the proceedings of that court. They come to the meeting when summoned, and they hear what is said by the Moderator, and they agree to what he proposes! Instead of the minister simply moderating the court, and proposing to that body whatever questions come up for them to judge of and decide according to the votes of the majority, very often that minister is not only Moderator of the session, but actually and practically the Session itself! And, accordingly, much more, when elders appear in Presbytery or Synod, or General Assembly, it is to take no part worthy of responsible and independent judges and rulers of the Lord's house!

In their own congregations many elders there are whom the people respect as good citizens; industrious, honest men; kind neighbors and pious Christians; but they get none of the respect which is demanded by the high spiritual office they wear. The reason is, that the elder himself is not sensible that "the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer over the flock, to feed the Church of God;" and, accordingly, he does not go about as he ought, both with and without the minister, "from house to house, warning every one night and day with tears." The people do not have the remotest conception that he is a pastor of the flock, because there is no visitation or other pastorship of the flock by him. I have heard it said that in the old country the children look on the visit of the elder with the same reverential awe, and yet the same filial delight, as on the visit of the minister. *There*, he is a minister; he is a pastor; he is

a bishop of souls. "In this country, sir," (said an old Scotch-Irish-Presbyterian to me not long since,) "there is no respect for the face of the elder."

Now, perhaps the one sufficient cause of this low estate of the elder's office amongst us, is the low conception referred to already, which is commonly entertained respecting the nature of the office. Our Church, to a great extent, has unfortunately conceived of them as only *assistants of the minister and deputies of the people*. "Who is your elder, sir?" was the mode formerly of enquiring at each minister in order to make the roll of the representatives of the churches. I have looked over the Minutes of the last General Assembly, and found there particular information upon almost every conceivable interest or concern of the church, but none at all about her ruling elders. I found all about the funds of her Seminaries, and the names of their students and professors; all about her various Boards; all about the number of communicants added to each church on certificate and on examination; the number of colored communicants; of infants and of adults baptized; of children in the Sunday Schools; all about the funds raised for Foreign Missions, Domestic Missions, Education, Publication, Church Extension, Presbyterian purposes, Congregational purposes, Miscellaneous purposes; all about the ministers and licentiates; every one's name and post-office, his titles of honor, his station in the church; the number of ordinations and installations of ministers, of ministers received and ministers dismissed to other denominations, of ministers deceased; the names of all the Moderators, all the stated clerks and all the permanent clerks the Assembly ever had; and the names, &c., of all the Presbyterian periodicals published in all the land—the whole closing with (a very useful thing by the way) a second list, in alphabetical order, of all the ministers and licentiates in the church. But, with all this extreme particularity of information about every other matter, not a word to let us know any thing about even the number, much more the names, of all the ruling elders! The whole volume seems to say that the Church does not value much her ruling eldership, that very special Ascension Gift of her Lord! Accordingly, when

an elder is to be elected and ordained in a congregation, very often, simple personal respectability, conjoined with hopeful piety, is considered as amply qualifying any man for the office. Rarely is it insisted upon that he shall be well acquainted with our Book or thoroughly grounded in his attachment to our system—and yet he is to administer the rules of that Book and govern according to the principles of that system! Sometimes a very moderate share of ordinary education is deemed sufficient for this pastor or bishop;—and yet this pastor or bishop must be “apt to teach!” Frequently the office is given to a man deeply immersed in worldly cares;—and yet he is a high spiritual officer, who must be devoted to the interests of the kingdom! How can it be imagined that an hour or two of some evening every week, or even perhaps every month, to be spent in attending the meetings of the session, is enough for the discharge by such an officer of that awful cure of immortal souls which he has suffered to be bound for life upon his shoulders!

Mr. President and brethren of the Board of Directors and of the Synod, I feel my spirit rise within me, and my heart glows as I look forward and anticipate the day, which appears to be approaching, when thoroughly Presbyterian views will prevail amongst us! We have a Divine system of government! We have Divinely instituted officers for the edification of the church! What we want is life, flowing through God’s own ordinances into the church—the life of God—the grace and power of the Almighty Spirit! We need to have more confidence in God; in His Word; in all that He has given to us as means of communicating His grace! We need to have a higher conception and a better appreciation of the Redeemer’s Ascension Gifts for the permanent use and benefit of His Church—His gifts of Pastors and Teachers! If the pastors and the teachers that now belong to us are so great a blessing, what a rich gift would be such as are really worthy of the name! If the elders we have now, imperfect as they are, help to make the Presbyterian Church what she is, in distinction from other non-Presbyterian Churches that are around her, what benefits would be conferred on her in an eldership such as God gave

the primitive church, and can give us also! We have several ruling elders in every church—in the whole body there must be several thousands. Just imagine all these office-bearers to be worthy of their high vocation; to be spiritual men, devoted to the service of the church; to be real workers in her service, real pastors or bishops, carrying into every house and family the doctrines faithfully preached in the pulpit by the teacher, and in the high and worthy sense of the term, his assistants and his supporters! How would such a ruling eldership re-act on the ministry itself, and help to push it up higher in efficiency and in power! Our teaching and our ruling elders thus become, by God's blessing, what they should be, then would our church begin to understand the greatness and the value of her Lord's Ascension-Gifts for her permanent use and benefit,—then would she find out the real power of that simple yet mighty Ministry which Christ Jesus himself established, the ministry of pastors and teachers!

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ARTICLE VIII.

**THE NEW THEOLOGICAL PROFESSORSHIP—NATURAL SCIENCE IN CONNEXION WITH REVEALED RELIGION.**

The importance of having in our theological seminaries an additional professorial chair to teach—not natural science in its minute and technical aspects, but the *connexion* existing between the natural sciences and revealed religion—has, by those who have observed the rapid progress in this department of human knowledge, and especially the use made of it by infidelity to invalidate the authority of Divine revelation, long been felt by many individuals. Public attention was called to this subject some eight or ten years ago by Professor Hitch-