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ARTICLE I.

THE SYMMETRY AND BEAUTY OF GOD'S WITNESSING
CHURCH.*

“The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.”—
Psalm 45: 13.

In the ordinary ministrations of the pulpit, and meditations of God's people, Christ the Saviour holds, and ought to have, the pre-eminent place; and exhibitions of doctrine respecting his person and work constitute the staple of every evangelical discourse, and the characteristic and leading theme of contemplation and faith to every believer. But there are other themes unfolded in the Scriptures besides those which are immediately conversant with the person and work of the Son of God—themes which indeed derive all their interest from Christ, and concentrate all their light to irradiate his glorious and adorable person, but which do not come into the category

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of the Gospel, in the popular acceptation of that term, and are, in consequence, often passed by with an indifference which is not justified by the word of God, and is injurious to the cause and glory of the person of Christ. Principal among these is the doctrine respecting the Church—a doctrine which is rarely admitted into our pulpits, unless in the form of controversy upon some one or other of the details of her organization—discussions in which the members of the subject are dislocated, and exhibited in fragments, so as to preclude the possibility of clear and adequate conceptions respecting it, or appreciation of its interest and importance. If others attach too much significance to questions concerning the Church, and have perverted them to the purposes of usurpation and schism, it can hardly be questioned that Presbyterians tend to error on the other extreme—to indifference concerning the doctrines which respect her constitution; and consequent under-valuation of her person and office.

But, in what exalted terms does the Spirit of God descant on the attractions of the queen, the bride of Immanuel! “The King’s daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.”—Psalm 45: 13. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” “Walk ye about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.”—Psalm 48: 2, 12, 13. “Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead.” “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.” “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!”—Cant. 4: 1, 7, 9, 10. A theme upon which we might multiply quotations such as these—a theme which arouses such emotions in the bosom of the Son of God, may surely claim something more than a casual and passing thought.

We have already, in a former number of this work, presented some thoughts as to the primary location of ecclesiastical power by the Son of God; and traced the results of the several theories on this subject in the Hierarchical, Independent, and Presbyterian systems.* In the present paper, we propose to exhibit the design of the Church as God's witness to the world; and in this to develop the great principle which underlies her structure in all ages; which has determined her whole constitution and history; and which, in the final result, will cause her to become the joy of the whole earth.

When the purpose of mercy to our ruined world was made known, and the promise of the redeeming seed was given to our first parents, the Holy Spirit was sent to earth to work faith and repentance in their hearts. That these graces were wrought in them, appears by the institution of sacrifices, and the clothing of their persons in the skins of the sacrificial animals. These were the divinely appointed tokens by which the covenant of peace was sealed to faith; and since, in the order of the Divine economy, the grace must precede the seal, we conclude that the Searcher of hearts found faith in the fallen pair when these seals were given.

The Spirit thus bestowed came not as a transient visitor; but to abide forever—until all the chosen shall have been called and sanctified—until the body of Christ shall be perfect—until the consummation of all things. This presence of the Spirit is not an outside presence, but an indwelling. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."—John 14: 17. Nor is it merely a several and separate indwelling and intimacy in the hearts of believers individually; but a common presence, exerting an assimilating and incorporating power, first, into Christ their Head, and then, of all believers, into each other—his members. In all he is the one fountain of a common life, which is hid with Christ in God. In all he is the one source of holiness, and principle of divine growth. In all he is the one

* The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church.—Southern Presbyterian Review, Vol. 10, p. 1.

energy and pledge of a glorious resurrection from the grave—one power of an endless life, in the presence of God in heaven. In all, of all generations, whether long since dead, or yet for ages to come unborn, he is one bond of common identity, each with all the rest, so that they all are one; and of joint communion and property in the one common Head; and this by virtue of the fact, that the uniting and quickening Spirit, by whom all is wrought, inhabiteth eternity; and accounts nothing of the lapse of time, the transitions of ages, and the mutations of generations. All time past and to come is to him one eternal now; and the transient generations of men, are all ever present.

Thus, the relation which unites John and Peter to the Mediator, whom they saw in the flesh, and loved and followed—is precisely the same as that of Abraham and Job, and all the older patriarchs, who looked forward with loving and eager desire to the long postponed fulfilment of his promised coming. Nor was it different from that which we now enjoy who believe in Christ—now that his work of abasement and sorrow is long since finished, and he sits enthroned on the seat of his glory. By one Spirit are all, of all ages, baptized into one body, and made partakers of one common life, which, comprehending all time, shall be continued after time forever on high.

The organism thus formed by the power of this life-giving Spirit is the mystical body of Christ, composed of all those who were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and called to holiness. It is the glorious bride, in whom the King, the Bridegroom, sees neither spot nor wrinkle; but perfect beauty and purity, and perfect love. To the several members of it, he, in the appointed times of his grace, gives this his Spirit. By it they are incorporated into the body. They, by the Spirit, are “transformed by the renewing of their minds.” In them he works sanctification alike by his several and his common presence and power; imparting to each, in his proportionate measure, repentance and faith, love, joy, peace, and every grace. Preparing them thus on earth for heaven, he at length removes to that world, first, the soul;

and afterward, at the resurrection, the body—transformed, incorruptible, spiritual and glorious.

Such is the fundamental and essential element in the constitution of the Church of Christ on earth—its constituents, the elect; and as these are distinguishable by no man; and will be known by none, until the time of the renovation of all things, this company—the mystical body of Christ—is commonly designated as the invisible Church. By the apostle, it is called “the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.”—Heb. 12: 23.

But the intention of the election of grace and the redemption of man was not merely the salvation of the elect. Much more was it designed to provide, in the redeemed, a body of witnesses, to testify to the universe on behalf of the justice and truth, the grace and glory of God. This world is a province of that universe; and in it as well as in heaven, has God seen fit to exhibit that testimony—a testimony here the more demanded, by how much man has apostatized from the knowledge and love of God, and enslaved himself to Satan and sin. Hence the occasion that the Church should assume an outward visible organization, and have a form adapted to recognition by the world; and suited to perform the office of testifying for God to the understandings and consciences of men—sensual, and blind to the things of God.

Hence the erection of the visible Church. It consists principally and characteristically of the elect—the members of the invisible Church. From them it derives its constitution and functions; and in them dwells the Holy Spirit, which is its life. But not the elect only—all men were given to the Son of God in the eternal covenant; and he sees good to use others, as well as his own peculiar people, in carrying on his purposes of grace and glory. He has, therefore, in the visible Church, associated with the elect many others who are qualified to constitute elements in an outward witnessing organization; but are not possessed of the common Spirit and life; nor are they vitally united to the mystical body, nor heirs of the glory to come.

Thus arises the distinction between the Church invisible and visible. The one comprehends some elements which do not

belong to the other. Yet, characteristically, and as a whole, the Church visible and invisible is one; and hence the Scriptures continually predicate of the former as a whole, whatever is true of the latter. "*A potiori nomen fit.*" The epistles address the professed disciples of Christ, in terms appropriate to them at large, as a class; although the language does not in all cases belong distributively to every one of the class so addressed. Thus when Peter says to his readers—"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy," 1 Peter 2: 9, 10—he speaks, without any formal discrimination, to the whole body of professed believers; yet is the language distributively appropriate to those, and those only, who have experienced the renewing of their minds, by the unction of the Holy One; and are become truly engrafted into the spiritual body—the living vine.

Precisely similar to this, is the discrimination which holds between our fleshly bodies, and those which shall live in the resurrection. Our natural bodies, besides those elements which are essential, and in which the identity resides, comprehend others of which it is said that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."—1 Cor. 15: 50. Yet is it of these bodies, thus constituted of mixed elements, that the promise of the resurrection is spoken; and they who are in the body, are represented as groaning with an ardor of desire for their change—"not for that they would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life."—2 Cor. 5: 4. We should feel it hypercritical and absurd, to deny that these corporeal frames are the bodies which shall inherit the resurrection, because we cannot tell which, of all the particular elements of which they are composed, shall realize the glory of that promise. As much so is it, to deny that the visible Church is the beloved bride of Christ—the true Church of God; because some elements in it are excluded from a share in

the inheritance in the heavens. To the Church visible the oracles of God were and are committed. To the apostles, as corporeal and visible agents, the commission was given for the re-organization of that Church and the gathering of the world into it as a visible body. To the particular visible congregations, by them organized as members of that body, were the epistles addressed; in which all the functions and prerogatives of the Church are predicated of them. It was in the Church visible that Christ set "first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."—1 Cor. 12: 28. To her—fulfilling his commission, in publishing salvation, to all nations—did he give the memorable and precious promise—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—Matt. 28: 20. In short, if there be any statement made in the Scriptures respecting the Church—whether it be, of duty, or privilege—of labor, or reward—of endowment, or prerogative—of threatening or promise—it will be found that to the visible Church it is addressed, and of her spoken. This, the very name by which she is designated, implies. Derived, not from *εκλεκτός*, the elect, but from *ἐκκαλέω*—to convene, *ἐκκλησία*, signifies a congregation or assembly; and is used to designate the "tumultuous mob of Ephesus."—Acts 19: 39, 41.) When Paul uses it as the designation of the family in heaven, he expressly marks it as synonymous with assembly—"The general Assembly and Church of the first-born."—Heb. 12: 23.

In short, any other view is fatal to the lawful administration of the ordinances at all, or the existence of the visible Church. If the predicates of the Church attach not to the visible, but only to the invisible body—it follows, on the one hand, that no association of men may exercise any of her functions until they have demonstrated, beyond peradventure, their membership in the invisible Church; they may not, for example, call a man to the ministry; nor, on the other hand, may he assume the authority of the ministry, unless he can prove infallibly his membership and ministry in the invisible body; which is impossible.

In fact, the visible is but the invisible Church putting forth her energies in an efficient form in the service of Christ. Her visibility is of necessity; and follows inevitably from the operation of two circumstances. First: Whilst she comprehends in her body all the redeemed in heaven, she also includes in it the multitude of the elect who still dwell in the flesh. As individuals here, they are personally known to the world, living in it, and busy with its concerns. Their lives and conduct are therefore open to observation and inspection. Second: The Holy Spirit which dwells in them, is the same who inspires in their brethren, before the throne in heaven, the adoring joy with which they proclaim, with tongue and harp, the praises of God's glorious attributes, and of the Lamb's redeeming grace. If, taught by that Spirit, those who have attained the inheritance, will infallibly proclaim the grace which brought them there—with equal certainty will that same heavenly Instructor impel those who are still on earth to testify of the grace which has bought them, of the promises which await them, and the God in whom they rejoice. But such a testimony given by men, in the flesh, is seen and known by the world, to whom it is strange; whilst it makes God's people known to each other. Thus outward pressure from the hostile world combines with the tie of the indwelling Spirit to bring them together, in visible separation from the world in which they live, and open testimony for God, and pursuit of heaven.

Whilst thus the visible Church is necessarily developed by the action of the mystical union, the identity of that Church is ascertained and established by the fact, that in her is seen the characteristic and habitual performance of the proper functions of the Church. All these have respect to what we have already hinted to be the end for which the Church was organized—the maintaining of a testimony for God. As this is a point of no small importance, we shall enter briefly into the evidence on which it rests. To attempt a full exhibition of it would involve a discussion of the entire scope of the Scriptures.

The Church is built upon "the foundation of the apostles

and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone."—Eph. 2: 20. What then are the characteristics of these upon whom she is founded, and of whose spirit she partakes? They are, in the Scriptures, distinctively designated as official witnesses for God. Thus Christ, the chief cornerstone of the building, proclaims himself "the faithful and true witness."—Rev. 1: 5. He is that "Word of God," who came for a light to the world, to testify to it of the love, the grace, and the justice of God. So, in regard to the prophets, Peter tells Cornelius and his house, that to Christ "give all the prophets witness."—Acts 10: 43. Paul tells the Romans, that "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."—Rom. 3: 21. And the angelic interpreter of John's visions, tells him—"I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."—Rev. 19: 10. To the apostles, Christ in his last interview before his ascension, says—"Thus it was written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."—Luke 24: 46-48, and Acts 1: 8. When Matthias was called to fill the place of Judas, in the apostate, it was that he might be "a witness of the resurrection."—Acts 1: 22. And when Paul was called to the same office, he was appointed to be Christ's "witness to all men."—Acts 22: 15. Thus, not only is Christ, the Head, designated pre-eminently "the faithful and true witness," but the prophets and apostles, the official organs of the Church, in their several dispensations, fill distinctively this precise office of witnesses for God.

But still more clearly are we taught that the Church is God's witness to the world. Herein is the whole meaning of our Saviour's declaration, in the sermon on the mount—"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that

they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—Matt. 5: 14–16. With this compare the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, which is evidently had in view in this language thus used by our Saviour—"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light; and kings to the brightness of thy rising."—Isaiah 60: 1–3. These may serve as examples of many places in which the Church is held forth as a light set in the moral firmament, not to shine in an original brilliancy, but to reflect the light of the glory of God shining upon her for a testimony to all nations.

To the same conclusion is the fact, that the hieroglyphic by which the Church is symbolized is a candlestick with its burning lamps. Thus, in the Revelation, John saw the Son of Man in the midst of seven golden candlesticks; and he is told by him, that the seven candlesticks which he saw were the seven churches; whilst, to the same effect, seven stars in the right hand of the Son of God were the angels or officers of the seven churches.—Rev. 1: 20. Such was the meaning of the candlestick of gold which stood in the tabernacle and temple. Burning continually in that part of the sacred place, which, veiled from the light of day, symbolized the earth—as, illumined by the shekinah, the holy of holies did heaven—it was a type of God's Church shedding its light on the world sitting in darkness.

Another fact to our present purpose presents itself in the institutions of Moses. The law of God, as written on the tables of stone, and committed to the guardianship of Israel is, by its Author, called "the testimony." Thus, God says to Moses in one place, "Thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee."—Ex. 25: 16. And again, "He gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."—Ex. 31: 18. Hence the tabernacle itself, which, in its various parts and in-

struments, as well as its various ordinances, represented the place of the abode of the Church on earth and in heaven, and to which the people brought all their stated offerings, and looked, in their more private acts of devotion, is designated as "the tabernacle of the testimony." The language of the 122d Psalm is a forcible illustration of the design of the God of Israel in these things, to mark the office of that people as one of witness on God's behalf—"Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together; whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."—Psalm 122: 3, 4. This tabernacle of testimony re-appears in the book of the Revelation in striking connection with the witnessing office of the Church, and the judgments which sanction her testimony. "The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened; and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles."—Rev. 15: 5, 6.

A slight notice of the several particular functions which are in the Scriptures attributed to the Church leads to the same conclusion already indicated. These are comprehended under two heads—instruction and discipline. Her instructions are dispensed by example, by oral teaching, and by symbols. That, in all these, the object is the exhibition of a testimony requires but little argument. In all the narratives of the New Testament, and all the epistles, great stress is laid upon this as the end and aim of the life of God's people and the preaching of the Gospel. The saints are chosen "that they may show forth the praises of Him who hath called them."—1 Pet. 2: 9. Our Saviour states as prerequisite to his second coming—"Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the Gospel must first be published among all nations."—Mark 13: 9, 10. So baptism is "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" that is, as a testimony and seal to the truth and power of the doctrines which cluster around these adorable names; and as often as the people of Christ partake of the

Lord's Supper, they do show forth the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. 11: 26.

That the exercise of discipline is an erection of testimony we need not pause to prove. Its whole intent is illustrated in that solemn admonition of Peter—"As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."—1 Pet. 1: 15, 16.

Need we add to the evidence already adduced, the many passages in which, in express and various terms, the witnessing office of the Church is asserted? Thus Paul declares that the grace of the ministry was given to him, "to the intent that now, unto principalities, and powers, in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold grace of God."—Eph. 3: 10. And, not to multiply examples, Peter tells the saints—"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness, into his marvellous light."—1 Pet. 2: 9.

Thus, then, the idea of the Church—that which is common and central both to the visible and invisible body—is not the elect; but the company of God's witnesses. As our salvation, although included in the great end, God's glory is, in any just estimate, altogether secondary and subservient to that end; so in the conception of the Church, the fact of that salvation attained, although distinctly and conspicuously recognized, is entirely subordinate to the higher fact, of the office to which we are saved—the attestation and increase of that glory.

Did our space permit, we might here proceed to show by an analysis of her history in all ages and lands, that just in proportion as the Church has enjoyed the quickening presence of the Holy Spirit, awakening her to a consciousness of the life which glows within her, and the mission to which she is called, has she appreciated and exalted this witnessing office as her peculiar function and highest honor; whilst in times of backsliding and apostacy this idea has become obscured; and, in its stead, an unbecoming pre-eminence has been given to the con-

ception of the Church as the company of the elect—the society of the redeemed. So invariable have been these characteristics, that no more accurate criterion of the state of the Church in any age can be devised. When formalism and apostacy prevail, the Church is found wrapped in carnal confidence and self-righteous security; crying—“The people of the Lord—the people of the Lord—the people of the Lord are we.” On the contrary, times of revival have invariably been times of testimony for God and his truth. Hence the apologies and creeds, the confessions and declarations, the acts and testimonies which have characterized certain periods in her history. Hence, too, that name of *martyr*, which has been used since the days of Stephen, to designate those who have suffered “for the testimony of Jesus.” None but martyr sons are worthy of the bride of Christ, as a mother; and none but a martyr Church is faithful to her calling and her husband.

This doctrine as to the design of the Church, carries with it inevitably the necessity of her visibility; which we have already demonstrated in another way. If she is to bear testimony to the world, it is necessary that she come within the world's cognizance; which is to become visible.

The Church set apart to the performance of an office so important, is not a mere aggregation of individuals—the mere company of redeemed persons. But, as many Scriptures certify, it is a thoroughly organized body, symmetrical in its proportions, and perfect in its members. By this we do not mean that organization which results from the formal association of believers in distinct congregations, and the election of officers in them; but a higher, a spiritual organization, upon which the other is predicated, and which, engrafting all into the Head, thence imparts to the members severally the several gifts requisite for the edifying of the whole; so that no member is without his own appropriate gifts and offices for the common good; and the failure of any one to exercise his gifts and fulfil the duties to which by the Spirit he is called and qualified, results necessarily in the injury of all. “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.”—1 Cor. 12: 26. To

this purpose Paul argues very clearly throughout that chapter. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."—1 Cor. 12: 4, 8–12, 27.

We have already seen that the testimony to which the Church is consecrated, is maintained by example, by oral instruction, by symbolical teaching, and by discipline. By example she condemns the world's apostacy, and forgetfulness of God, and love of sin. By example she testifies to the competence of the redeeming grace of Christ, and the renewing and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. By example she most effectually commends the truth and the value of the Gospel; whilst she proclaims it, in oral instructions, to the ears and understandings of men. In the sacraments she bears witness, in another form to the need and the power of renewing grace, and the virtue of the sacrifice which was offered on Calvary. In the exercise of discipline; excluding from her society and fellowship the unholy, receiving believers, and correcting their faults, she attests the holiness of the God whom she adores, and the sanctitude which he requires of those who would come before Him; and marks the separation between the people of God and the people of Satan.

Such being the functions in the exercise of which the Church fulfils her commission, it follows from the fact, that in her dwells the Holy Spirit—a living Spirit, exerting in her a controlling energy—that she will always be found, in some degree, greater or less, engaged in the performance of these functions. Hence the marks of the true Church, as given by Calvin, and

commonly held by the Reformed. "The marks by which the Church is to be distinguished, are the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments." "Wherever we find the Word of God purely preached, and heard, and the Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there it is not to be doubted is a Church of Christ."—Institutes B. IV. C. I. 10, 9. Precisely to the same effect is the doctrine of the Westminster Assembly—"The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel, (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Unto this catholic visible Church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto."—Conf. of Faith, Ch. 25: Sec. 2 and 3. It is those who *profess* the true religion, as well as possess it, who constitute the Church; and it is not the pretence of being the true Church, but the testimony of the truth which is determinate. The preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments—where the testimony of God is maintained, in these ways of his appointment, with any measure of faithfulness—even though it be mixed with much of imperfection and error, there is a branch of the Church of Christ; whilst, wherever these fail, it is the seal of apostacy; and the body in which it occurs, although it may have been once a member of the pure bride of Christ, is thenceforth to be accounted a member of anti-christ, and its assemblies the synagogues of Satan.

"This catholic visible Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less, visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.

“The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to his will.”—Conf. of Faith, Ch. 25: Sec. 4 and 5.

But whilst the possession and exercise of these functions are essential to the existence of the Church, the form and manner of their exercise is not of the same vital importance. In this respect much of error and irregularity is liable to mix itself with the work of God, seeing this treasure is put into earthen vessels. Yet is the grace of God not thereby so straitened, as to withdraw from those who maintain, however irregularly, yet honestly and in sincerity, a standard for the truth. As the tree is known, not by a reference to the deformity or symmetry of its branches, nor to the defective growth, or perfection of the fruit, but by the nature of that fruit; so the Church is to be recognized wherever the fruits are seen; even though they may hang immature and imperfect from gnarled and sickly branches. Wherever Christ's testimony is maintained, there is Christ's Church; there dwells his Spirit. If any particular Church should seem to be dissevered from the common body—whether by defect or succession, or of visible communion—yet, if it bear the fruit, it is certain that it is a shoot of the true vine, springing from the common root, and partaking of the common life and fatness. Like some majestic and spreading banyan, this vine of Lebanon increases; in one place, by the growing dimensions of the central stock and its extending branches; in another, by sending down shoots from its mighty arms to seize new soil, and derive new life and luxuriance from the extended surface; sometimes by scions shooting upwards from the roots, which have wandered, unseen and unsuspected, beneath the surface. Here a giant trunk rises in stateliness, and bears upward its branching honors toward the heavens; whilst a numerous retinue of scions surround the parent tree, sharing its life and fatness, and bearing up its fruitful head. There a thrifty stem shoots up in apparent independence, although embraced on all hands by the intertwining branches of the vine. Another stands alone, not only without

apparent connection with the root, but alien to the society toward which it extends no brotherhood, and from which it accepts no embrace. Yet are all true churches nourished by the one common life—all spring from the one common root—the Root of David—all are pervaded by one Spirit—consecrated to one work and service—witnesses to one testimony—and heirs of one inheritance.

As the unity of the Church does not consist in a visible incorporation into one body, but in the one life imparted by the Holy Spirit, inducing common sympathies, a common fruit, and a testimony essentially the same—so does not her perpetuity depend upon the continuity of a particular visible organization; but upon the efficiency of the Holy Spirit, raising up in all ages an unbroken series of witnesses, seen and known of the world, and faithful to the testimony of Jesus. Yet these successive bodies of witnesses never originate by a spontaneous or sporadic process; but in all cases arise immediately out of the labors of those who preceded them—offshoots from some older branch of the living tree—connected—not necessarily by an orderly succession of officers—but by an immediate derivation of life and testimony from the earlier to the younger branches. Thus is there an apostolic succession, not of ordination, but of spiritual life, endowments and labors—a succession, lineal, though not always rectilinear; real, if not always traceable by human skill—a succession, which although it flows at times through the body of the Roman anti-christ, is not identified with it, but hostile to it. The tumor which has grown at the expense of the structure and powers of some member of the body is penetrated by the natural arteries, by which the vital fluid is conveyed through the diseased mass to the extremities. The life and symmetry of these extremities is not derived from the revolting fungus which has interposed between them and the body. No more are the vitality and beauty of the churches of the reformation to be referred to any thing derived from the mother of abominations. The pious parents of Luther are but examples of the multitudes who, although within her pale, were not of her; but bore a testimony constantly, and in a more or less visible form, for Christ's

precious truth, which she betrayed. These constituted the apostolic succession, through whom the living waters flowed to after generations in an unailing stream.

Since then—as in the pre-Abrahamic dispensation—the Church may exist, and perform imperfectly her functions without distinct organization; much less is any precise form of organization essential to her existence. Yet has she a normal structure, which is held forth in the Scriptures, and through which alone she can exert with the greatest efficiency her powers, maintain her growth and beauty, and fulfil her office. In this organization everything springs from, and is subordinate to, the fundamental fact, of the unity of the body, and community of all the members in its functions, and in the various gifts and graces of the several members. If individuals are called to exercise important gifts, or fill conspicuous and influential offices, they fill them on behalf of the body, and by virtue of the authority which Christ has given her; and the peculiar gifts and graces with which they are endowed, they possess by virtue of union with her, and by the power of the Spirit which dwells in her. “Now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are there many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”—1 Cor. 12: 18–21. In fact here is literally verified that saying of the Lord Jesus—“Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister, and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”—Mark 10: 43–45. The highest office and dignity in the Church is a ministry—a service; and the most privileged position is of self-sacrifice, at the behest, and for the advantage of the whole. In fact, all that her officers can accomplish, in any form of official labor, is to give voice to the life and conduct of the church—to the teaching of her example, which proclaims her a stranger and pilgrim here, and makes known the grace by which she is endowed, and the glories of which she is heir.

In the orderly constitution of the Church, there are three objects for which official provision is requisite. These are, the proclamation of the truth, for the warning and ingathering of those that are without, and instruction and sanctification of the members; the guarding and ruling of the fold, so as to exclude those who do not have the mark of the good Shepherd, to guide the flock, and reclaim wanderers; and provision for the temporal necessities of those who are employed in her service, or dependant on her charity. Hence arise the offices of the teaching eldership, of the ruling eldership, and of the diaconate. Of these, the two former have more immediate respect to the business of the Church as God's witness; and are therefore common to both dispensations of the organized Church. The deacon's office having more direct reference to the fact, that the Gospel is now published at home and abroad by preachers sent forth and sustained by her, and reveals its grace pre-eminently to the poor, is peculiar to the Gospel Church; although, to all essential purposes, the former dispensation was amply furnished with suitable provision for the poor, and the ministry.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, the tribe of Levi was set apart to the office of instruction; which they fulfilled, not only by performing the symbolical rites at the temple, but by teaching the people throughout the land; whilst with them the elders were joined in the duties of government and discipline.* A passage in the prophecy of Zechariah, if we mistake not, bears directly on this subject, and illustrates the relation of these two offices to the functions of the Church. "And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick, all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof; and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof." "Then answered I and said unto him, What are these two olive trees, upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof? And I answered

*See Deut. 31: 9-13; 33: 10, 11; 2 Chron. 17: 7-9, &c.

again, and said unto him, what be these two olive branches, which, through the two golden pipes, empty the golden oil out of themselves." "Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth."—Zech. 4: 2, 3, 11–14. Compare this with John's vision in the Revelations—"I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophecy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will."—Rev. 11: 3–6. These olive trees are in Zechariah's vision seen to be organically united to the Church, although they are separate and distinct from its body. Through their activity the oil of grace in the Church is replenished, so as to render it continually luminous; showing thus God's glory. They are not peculiar to the former dispensation, but, as John testifies, are enjoyed by the Church in the time of anti-christ. They are God's peculiar witnesses; and are prophets; and in them is power—the power of the keys, to shut heaven, and inflict the judgments of God on incorrigible enemies. Are not these two olive trees—these witnesses, symbols of the ministries of instruction and discipline in the Church? These ministries are the instruments through whom the Church is nourished and built up. These are the means through which her testimony to holiness and God is published. These are they that bear the keys of the kingdom, so that "whatsoever they shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever they shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."—Matt. 16: 19. Against these equally and pre-eminently is the hostility of the world and anti-christ arrayed; a pure discipline exciting, if possible, a more intense hostility than the pure doctrine of God; and this, for the reason, that men may evade the truth preached, by refusing to hear; but they cannot evade that dis-

cipline by which, if without, the ungodly are forbidden entrance into the Church; and which, if they should gain admittance by its authority, retrains their lusts, or expels them from the fold.

The functions which, under the former dispensation, were performed by the tribe of Levi, and the elders of Israel, now devolve on pastors and ruling elders. The qualifications and duties of these officers are defined in the Scriptures; and those who fill them are called and designated to their service through the mediation of the Church, acting under the promised guidance of the Spirit of Christ, leading her to the choice of such persons as he has qualified and appointed for her service. The functions and services of these officers appertain, not to the particular congregations merely among whom they may be called to labor, but to the Church at large. This follows necessarily from the unity of the Church; and is very fully testified in the Scriptures. Of the evidence, our space allows us to introduce but one or two elements.

Upon occasion of the destruction of the first-born of Egypt, God commanded Moses—"Sanctify to me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel: it is mine."—Ex. 13: 2. These first-born, redeemed from destruction by the paschal blood, were thus set apart as holy to God; and the law was established, that all the first-born in Israel should be redeemed from death, by a price in money, and should belong to the service of God. Henceforward the priesthood, which had been previously exercised by the father, was vested in the first-born. Thus on them were bestowed the sacred functions, which, distributively, belong to their several families; and in them, collectively, were those of the entire Church. After this, the Levites having atoned for the idolatry of the golden calf, by the punishment of the idolators, God called them to take the place of the first-born—"I, behold I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the first-born that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel."—Num. 3: 5-13. That the vicarious character of this transaction might be more apparent, Moses was required to number the first-born, and the tribe of Levi.

The numbers were respectively 22,273, and 22,000. And the Lord said—"Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel. And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the first-born of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites, thou shalt even take five shekels apiece, by the poll, and thou shalt give the money wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed to Aaron and his sons."—Num. 3: 39-51. Still further to signalize the representative character of the Levites, they were ordained by the hands of all the people, (Num. 8: 10); whilst Aaron, the type of Christ, was set apart by Moses alone, (Lev. 8: 1-5,) who was to him "instead of God."—Ex. 4: 16.

Thus the sacred functions—which were essentially in each individual of that "kingdom of priests," (Ex. 19: 6,)—were distributively assigned to the first-born, in whom, as individuals, the several families recognized their own prerogatives and privileges. These, thus ascertained and located, were then so combined and invested in the Levites, as to preclude any idea of several and separable interests; and all were referred to a community of title in common prerogatives, and a common grace.

Precisely similar is the constitution of the New Testament Church. Hence the language of the apostle—"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."—1 Cor. 12: 27, 28. Thus does he give to teachers helps and governments, the same extensive relation to the Church catholic which he attributes to the apostles and prophets on whom it is built. Yet as the labors of the ordinary officers of the Church are, by the nature of the case, confined to specific fields of more or less limited extent; so are they called and set apart to their work, through the intervention of particular congregations, or associations of them; acting under the guidance of the one Spirit which pervades the whole.

These officers do not derive investiture from any lineal apos-

toxic succession, but from the Head of the Church; and the form of ordination is not designed to intimate such succession, but to bear witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit, in the bosom of the Church, recognizes the commission which her Head has already given to the party. Nor is this view affected by the fact that men are sometimes ordained, who are undoubtedly children of Satan; since the case of Judas, conclusively shows that the Son of God may and does call to temporary service in his Church, for his own holy and inscrutable purposes, men who have no part in his salvation themselves. The essential requisite to official status, is the appointment of Christ. The essential evidence of it, is the attestation of the Spirit in the bosom of the Church. He that hath these, is a minister of Christ clothed with full authority; even though he should never receive imposition of hands.

Our space will not permit us to enter into an exhibition of the orderly gradation of governing assemblies—subordinate, the local to the provincial, and all to that in which the unity of the body is represented. The whole system grows normally out of the unity of the Church—the inseparable relation which we have seen—the functions of all the officers and members sustain to that unity—and the necessary distribution of those functions to every part. By these, on the one hand, that unity is maintained, and a common sentiment and sympathy cherished throughout the whole body; whilst, on the other, efficiency and pervasive power is secured, by the distribution of responsibility and labor to every member.

We have already intimated, that the Church sprang into life with the utterance of the promise to the woman. Its very beginning was marked by an event—the murder of Abel—which signalized the hostility to which the witnessing Church must ever be subject, from the children of the world. Says John to the saints—“Ye are not as Cain who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.”—John 3: 12, 13. In the family of Seth the Church was continued, whilst Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.

But although we find an Enoch walking with God, and for his faith and holiness translated, yet so alluring to human corruption were the pleasures of the world, that the "sons of God" by degrees abandoned their profession, and allied themselves with the ungodly; until Noah and his family remained alone of all the race, faithful to warn a guilty world, when the surging waters of the flood were ready to sweep away at once all traces of their existence and their crimes.

Peacefully borne upon the waters, safe in the midst of universal ruin, God preserved his Church. And no sooner is the danger past, than the ransomed family erect an altar, and call upon the Lord, who seals with them a covenant of peace, by the bow in the cloud. Yet, with the memory of this, God's judgment ever before them, and its monuments all around them, how quickly did the children of Noah go astray. We hear of a pious Abimelech, and of a Melchisedec, priest of the most high God; but besides these the whole world seems turned to idols.

The time had now come, in the designs of God, for the organization of the Church as a distinctive body. The prior dispensation was tentative, and the Church was under it unorganized. In it was tried the question, whether the world—voluntarily apostate—would, as a whole, freely and at once return to the freely offered covenant of peace—whether it would cease from rebellion, and cordially accept the offers of grace. The result showed the world alike obdurate to the arguments of interest, the persuasions of mercy, and the terrors of judgments; not only lost to holiness and peace, but deliberately and pertinaciously lost to the claims of gratitude, the motives of reason, and the attractions of goodness. But now was the Church formally organized, for preserving and transmitting the knowledge of the truth to the end of time—for the erection of a standard for God, and maintaining a testimony for him against the apostacy of a rebel world.

Abram was called from Ur, of the Chaldees. He buried his father, and left his brother's children in Haran; and was at length left, by the separation of Lot at Sodom, a pilgrim and a stranger upon the earth; alone, with his beloved Sarai. With

him was established the covenant of peace—"I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee."—Gen. 17: 7. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."—Gen. 22: 18. But the Church, as erected in the family of Abraham, was not designed for the publication of the truth, and the proclamation of the promise; but to keep and transmit it to others. She was not privileged to bear forward the standard into the conflict with the world and Satan for the possession of the earth; but to guard it, planted in the camp, until the day of battle and conquest. Erected in Canaan, in the very midst of the lands, its light gleamed afar upon the surrounding nations; shining, not to dispel, but to condemn the darkness. That was the time of the minority of the Church. As yet immature for her great commission, she was "under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father."—Gal. 4: 2. The saints of that age, "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."—Heb. 11: 39, 40.

At length the fulness of time was come, and God sent forth his own Son into the world. He "loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."—Eph. 5: 26, 27. Thus having brought her up for himself, did the Son of God celebrate the espousals, purchasing her to himself at a price of blood. Then gave he her the world as her field, and the nations as her possession; with the promise that "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High."—Dan. 7: 27. Thus espoused to himself, and endowed with a goodly dowry, he left her for a season, to return and dwell with her forever. As he departs he gives her his commission of grace—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."—Mark

16: 15. And "when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men;"—gifts of grace to the world, and of love to the Church. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."—Eph. 4: 8, 11, 12.

But though thus organized and commissioned, thus qualified and endowed, she may not yet enter on the glory. Not yet is the kingdom given to Israel. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord."—Matt. 10: 25. It is enough for the bride that she be as her husband. If he was abased before the exaltation—if he shed his blood to win the glory, it is a small thing that she should be partaker in the shame and sufferings of her glorious Head. Yet, through centuries of imbecility and unfruitfulness, of persecution and apostacy must she learn, that it is not her own arm that bringeth salvation; that it is not for her sake—faithless and forgetful—that he doeth this, but for his own name's sake; that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts, that the world is to be overcome, and the kingdom of righteousness and peace established. But she shall at length appear in beauty and power. She shall "look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."—Cant. 6: 10. Hitherto hath she rather bowed in widowhood and mourning, than sat as a queen, or rejoiced as a bride. But the time draws near when her beauty, hitherto veiled, shall shine forth—when—her widowhood ended—her tears shall cease, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

Such is she whose beauty delights the King—the bride, glorious and radiant in purest gold. Her body, the blood-bought host. Her office, the vindication of the honor of the Holy One in the presence of an apostate world. Her organization fitted in perfect adaptation to this end—in the perfection of beauty—the glory of holiness which shines in her person;—in the knowledge, the wisdom and diligence of her evangelists and prophets, her pastors and teachers;—the zeal, the faithfulness

and Divine authority and power of her elders—and the charity and self-sacrifice of her deacons. Her robes—of fine linen, spotless white, embroidered with gold—the marriage gift of her husband. Her history, one of affliction and suffering, of toil and triumph in his service. To the carnal eye there is in her, as in the King, no form nor comeliness. But to him she is altogether lovely; and to the believer, how radiant does her person appear, as she stands before the world, in the midst of the darkness of man's apostacy and sin, and the gloom of the curse, leaning on the arm of the Beloved, and testifying of his loveliness and grace; herself the purchase of his streaming blood, and dying groans; herself his commissioned witness to the lost, proclaiming peace, and offering salvation; herself baptized by that one Spirit with which he was anointed; and her whole being pervaded and quickened with the power and vitality of his life; she the fruitful mother of the many sons whom he will at length assemble on high. Shining in glory forever, sharing with the King in his throne his sceptre and power, shall she present the perfection of beauty and the fruition of joy. In her, will a wondering universe behold the riches of God's condescending grace; and the majesty of the Lamb's redeeming power; her countenance—beaming in his perfect likeness—and her beauty and blessedness, her history and state, the noblest display of the unsearchable depths of God's glorious wisdom and ineffable love—the subject of angelic studies, and the theme of all heaven's adoring song.

POSTSCRIPT.

Our article was intended for the April number of the Review; and although it was too late for that purpose, it was in the hands of the printer before the appearance of Dr. Robinson's treatise, entitled "The Church of God an essential element of the Gospel." This will account to the reader for our entire silence in respect to this publication of the distinguished scholar, whose withdrawal from the chair of instruction in Danville Seminary, our Church is now called to regret. The work of Dr. R., though short, is rich in suggestive thoughts and expansive conceptions on the great subject of which he

treats. We are not, however, altogether prepared to acquiesce in all his opinions as here set forth. He looks upon the Divine purpose—the doctrine of the decrees, as the great central truth of theology, whence all others spring, and derive their unity, form, and significance. The unity of the book of Revelation consists in the unfolding of this purpose; and in it all, the characteristic attitude of the Most High is that of absolute Lord, ruling all things by his omnipotent will, in the assertion of his sovereignty. The coronation strain in which the Psalmist says of the Son—“Thy *throne*, O God, is forever and ever; a *sceptre* of righteousness is the sceptre of thy *kingdom*—is regarded as the key-note of prophecy; and “in so far as the Scripture is a Gospel, strictly so called, it is the annunciation of a kingdom of heaven at hand.” Hence the highest conception of the Redeemer, is as king; the most adequate idea of his people is as subjects of his government, chosen in sovereignty to be such; and Dr. R's. definition of the Church is—“That body of men, taken as a whole, or any part thereof, which, according to God's eternal purpose to call out and organize a part of mankind into a kingdom, is called successively in time by his Word and Spirit to a confession of Christ, an engagement to his covenant, and subjection to the laws of his kingdom.

We dissent with deference from the views so forcibly put by our learned and respected friend. But the doctrine of the Divine purpose viewed in itself, does not seem to us to constitute a principle of unity at all; since the purpose of God, as such, might embrace a thousand independent lines of operation, and as many distinct results. Nor are we favorably impressed with a theory which would seem to exalt mere sovereignty to the place of highest consideration and honor. We love to look upon the whole work and revelation of God, as the unfolding indeed of an eternal purpose; but a purpose born of eternal love, and designed for the exhibition, in the creatures, and to them, of the ineffable moral glories of the Creator. We have regarded the distinctive office of our world, and of the dispensations of God toward man, as designed to reveal and illustrate, not to man only, the inner mysteries of the Divine nature—the doctrine respecting the moral nature of God, as he is the Triune. Hence the creation of Adam by the Three, in “the image and likeness of God.” Hence the several dispensations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Hence the incarnation of the Son, the second Adam—“the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person”—who came for the avowed purpose of declaring

the Father—making known the Godhead in the flesh. Hence the organization of the Church, designed to accomplish the end for which Adam was made, and from which he apostatized; but in a far higher and fuller manner. As the body of Christ, the second Adam, it is in and with him, the Head, the noblest revelation of the infinite glories of the blessed Trinity; and will be so, as on earth, much more in heaven. We do not look upon either the prophetic, the priestly, or the kingly office of Christ, as involving the central conception of his relation to the Church. "He is the Head of the body." This is the consummate title, in which all the others are comprehended. And so of his people; they are indeed redeemed by his blood, instructed by his teachings, and governed by his laws. But they are elected and called to all this in order that, as members of his body, pervaded by the Spirit of the Head, "they may show forth the praises of Him who hath called them." They are not so much subjects obedient to his laws, as, members conformed to the Head. They are not only taught by his formal instructions—rather are they pervaded and enlightened by that very same Spirit of knowledge, which is his Spirit, and is the truth itself. They are not merely purchased with his blood; but as one with him, and partakers of the same sufferings, to the glory of the same God, and inheritance of the same joy. And when at last the voice of the great multitude shall shout "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready;" all heaven will indeed exult in the sovereignty of the Omnipotent One; but every harp will be tuned and every tongue inspired with the contemplations of the other attributes which the marriage scene reveals; and in the light of which, it is that the sovereignty of God will indeed be recognized as infinitely glorious.

Whilst we thus venture to differ from some of the sentiments of our author, we hail the appearance of his valuable treatise, and the interest which was elicited by its first utterance in the presence of our General Assembly, and its publication in the present form, as the pledge of an awakening of interest to a vastly important, and by us too much neglected, subject.