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ART. I.—*On the Elocution of the Pulpit: an Introductory Lecture, delivered at the Theological School of Montauban*: By Professor Adolphe Monod.

THE author of the following discourse is the celebrated Adolphe Monod, who, though still a young man, has been for some years regarded as second to no pulpit-orator in France. He is at present a member of the Theological Faculty at Montauban, a Protestant seminary, in which evangelical Christians ought to take a special interest, as well for what it has been, and is, as for the dangers which impend over it from the hostility of the government. It is believed, that no one can read Professor Monod's lecture, without being awakened by its vivid originality, and convinced by its native truth.

ALTHOUGH the art of recitation depends more on practice than on theory, it nevertheless has certain rules, which must be presented to the mind before you can address yourselves with profit to the exercises which are demanded, and which form the object of this course. In commencing the lectures of the year, I think it my duty to lay these rules before you, or rather to recall them to your memory. In so doing, I limit myself to such general views as may be

which serves to point its moral. They are serious, yet attractive, breathing an eminently benevolent spirit, and adapted in our judgment to do good.

Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa; by Robert Moffat, twenty-three years an agent of the London Missionary Society in that Continent. New York: Robert Carter, 58 Canal-St. 1843.

MR. MOFFAT has long been known to the Christian public, as one of the most laborious, devoted and useful missionaries of the present age. The work before us is the recital of labours and adventures, many of them of the most remarkable and romantic kind. It furnishes facts of great interest to the Christian philosopher, in illustration of the character of depraved human nature, and of the forms and results of that depravity, when left to work itself out without restraint. It supplies some of the most signal instances which we have ever read of the triumphs of divine grace, in supplanting the ferocious passions of human nature by the lovely graces of the Spirit, and raising to the elevation of Christian character, savages sunk to the lowest depths of brutality. Our readers doubtless remember something of the thrilling history of Africaner: the present work, in addition to a full account of that wonderful chief, abounds in incidents of the same absorbing kind. It is as entertaining as it is instructive. And sure we are, that no one can follow the pious, self-denying, and laborious missionary, through this record of his labours, without an intelligent appreciation of the cause of missions, and a hearty desire that the blessing of God may continue to crown his efforts for the salvation of "the perishing and helpless and all but friendless millions, for whom he has hitherto laboured, whom he ardently loves, and with whom, all black, barbarous and benighted as they are, he hopes to live, labour and die!"

Rights of Ruling Elders. By Calvin. The Presbyterian. Nos. 614—618.

Rights of Ruling Elders. By Presbyter. The Presbyterian. Nos. 621—626.

THE subject discussed in the series of papers above mentioned, has assumed an importance which forces the consideration of it on all the friends of our church. The question at issue is: Have ruling elders the right to join

in the imposition of hands in the ordination of ministers of the gospel? Those who answer in the affirmative say that there are but two orders in the ministry, elders and deacons; of the first order; there are two classes invested with different offices, though belonging to the same order; to the one class belongs the function of ruling, to the other those of ruling, teaching and administration of the sacraments. "We hold," says Presbyter, "to an identity of order, but diversity of office." Presbyterian ordination admits the recipient to the order of elders or presbyters; election by the people, or installation by the presbytery invests him with the office of ruling or teaching elder, as the case may be, "and thus it follows upon general principles that a two-fold ordination is superfluous and unnecessary, and might be consistently dispensed with, were it not for the express provision of the *lex positiva*, the constitution of the church."* In other words, the theory and the constitution are in direct conflict. It is strange that the shock of this collision did not waken the Presbyter from the pleasing dream that he is labouring to bring the practice of the church into harmony with its laws. His theory would lead to a practice, which he admits the constitution condemns. He must, therefore, acknowledge either that the constitution is in conflict with itself, enjoining a practice inconsistent with its principles, or that his theory and that of the constitution are two very different things. His theory requires, nay admits of but one ordination; the constitution requires two; one to the office of ruling elder, and a second when a ruling elder is made a minister. It is impossible, therefore, that Presbyter and the constitution can hold the same doctrine.

It is easy to see the source of the mistake into which he has fallen. He says ministers and elders are of the same order, but have different offices; ordination confers order, and election by the people, or installation confers office. Now if it should turn out that ordination confers office, there is of course an end of the whole argument. The word *order* is one of vague import. It is often used in the sense in which it is employed by Presbyter to designate a class of persons distinguished by some common peculiarity from the rest of the community. In this sense the military are an order; so are the clergy, and so, in many countries,

* Presbyter, No. II.

are the nobility. Now the only way in which a man can be admitted into any order, is by appointing him to some definite office or rank, included in that order. The only way in which a man is introduced into the military order, is by a commission conferring on him a certain rank or office in the army; and to introduce a man into the order of nobles, something more is necessary than a vague patent of nobility; he must be created a baron, earl, marquis or something else included in the order. And in like manner no man is introduced into the order of the clergy in any other way than by conferring upon him some clerical office. Ordination, therefore, confers order only because it confers office. Need the question even be asked whether the doctrine of Presbyter, that ordination confers order, and election or installation, office, is consistent with our constitution? "Ordination," says the Westminster Directory, "is the solemn setting apart of a person to some public church office." Our constitution is no less explicit. It prescribes the mode in which "ecclesiastical rulers should be ordained to their respective offices." With regard to the ruling elder it is said, after the preliminary steps have been taken, "The minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate, by prayer, to the office of ruling elder." In like manner it speaks of the preaching elder, being "solemnly ordained to the work of the gospel ministry." Ordination to office, therefore, is the only ordination of which our constitution has any knowledge.

If then it is the plain undeniable meaning of our constitution, that ordination confers office, that it constitutes a man a minister or ruling elder, and not merely introduces him into the order of presbyters, it seems to us that the whole foundation of the argument under consideration is swept away. The argument rests on a false assumption as to the nature and design of ordination. Now it is a principle, which is universally admitted by all denominations of Christians, except the Independents, that the right to ordain to any office in the church belongs to those who hold that office, or one superior to it, and which includes it. A minister ordains ruling elders because he is himself a ruling elder as well as a minister. The only ground, therefore on which the right of ruling elders to take part in the actual ordination of ministers of the gospel can be maintained, is that they hold the same office. But this cannot be asserted with any show of regard to the constitution.

Every page relating to the subject, plainly teaches that they have different offices. It tells us that the ordinary and perpetual officers in the church are pastors, elders and deacons; that the pastoral office is the first in dignity and usefulness, the duties of which are mentioned in detail; that the ruling elder holds a different office, the rights and duties of which are also particularly mentioned. All this is so clear that it is admitted as an indisputable fact. Presbyter complains that Calvin entirely misapprehends the ground taken by himself and his friends in supposing that they hold the identity of the offices of teaching and ruling elders. No one, he says, "has ever stated or contended for such a principle, or any thing like it." "We hold to identity of order but diversity of office."

We may remark, in passing, that in the light of this admission, his rebuke of Calvin for saying that the minister "has a right to take an official place above" the elders, seems somewhat unaccountable. This, he says, if it means any thing means that "the teaching elder or presbyter is, as a matter of right, officially above the ruling presbyter; the one is preferred (*praelatus*) above the other, holds a higher rank, forms another and distinct order, thus making two orders, which with the deacons makes three orders in the ministry. If this is not prelacy what is it? . . . This is not diocesan episcopacy or prelacy it is true, but what is just as bad in principle, viz., parochial episcopacy or prelacy, and only differs from the former in this, that in that case one bishop or presbyter is preferred (*praelatus*) above the presbyters of a diocese."* How often does it happen that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light! Here are we making ourselves the laughing stock of other denominations, by our disputes about the first principles of our organization. Presbyterians have time out of mind been contending for parochial in opposition to diocesan episcopacy, when it turns out at last that the one is as bad in principle as the other; that both are equally inconsistent with presbyterianism! It is but the other day we saw, in the Presbyterian, if we mistake not, an argument in favour of our system, derived from the fact that there were three hundred bishops in one council in the north of Africa; sixty bishops in a province not larger than New Jersey; fifty in another; forty in ano-

* Presbyter, No. I.

ther. This was appealed to in proof that parochial and not diocesan episcopacy then prevailed, and parochial episcopacy was held to be presbyterianism. . But it seems it is no such thing ; that if we “once admit the official inferiority in order or rank of the ruling elder to the preaching elder, then is presbyterian parity destroyed, and prelacy virtually established.”* Now what says our book on this subject. Presbyterian admits that the office of the minister differs from that of the elder. If they differ, the one may be higher than the other. The book, in speaking of bishops or pastors, says their office is “the first in the church for dignity and usefulness.” There are then three permanent officers in the church—bishops, elders, and deacons, and of these the bishop is pronounced the first in dignity and usefulness. Is this not official superiority? If a general is the first officer in an army, is he not officially superior to a colonel? If our constitution supposes a parity of office among ministers and elders, why is it said that the minister “shall always be the moderator of the session”? Why in the case of his absence are the session directed to get a neighbouring minister to act as moderator, and only when that is impracticable, are they allowed to proceed without one? On the other hand, the constitution directs that “the moderator of the presbytery shall be chosen from year to year.” There is no such superiority of one minister over another, as to authorize his acting as the perpetual moderator of the presbytery. When an elder is to be tried, he is arraigned before the session; but process against a gospel minister, must always be entered before the presbytery. Why is this, but that a man has a right to be tried by his peers? If so, then the elders are not the peers of the ministers; they are not officially his equals, though personally they may be greatly his superiors. Now as our book calls the pastor of a congregation a bishop, and never gives that title to elders, as it declares his office to be the first in dignity in the church, as it constitutes him the perpetual moderator of the session,

* The words “order or rank” in the above sentence adds nothing to its meaning. It is “official superiority” of the minister to the elder that Presbyterian pronounces to be prelacy. This is evident, because Calvin said nothing about order in the sentence which is the ground of Presbyterian’s charge of prelacy; he said simply that the minister “had an official place above” his elders. This Presbyterian says is “out and out” the prelatical principle. If the “teaching elder is as a matter of right officially above the ruling presbyter,” then, he says, parity is destroyed, and prelacy established.”

confers on him the right to ordain ruling elders, and declares that he is amenable, not to the session but to the presbytery, it establishes parochial episcopacy, just as much as the canons of the Church of England establish prelacy or diocesan episcopacy. This is presbyterianism; the presbyterianism of Geneva, France, Germany, Holland, Scotland, and of our fathers in America; and if we are now to have a different kind, we must get a new book.

If then it is admitted that ministers and ruling elders hold different offices, and if as has been clearly shown from the constitution, ordination confers office, the inference seems unavoidable, that those only who hold the office of a minister of the gospel can confer that office upon others. Presbyterians deny the right of ordination to the civil magistrate; they deny it, under ordinary circumstances, to the people; they deny it to any, who have not themselves been invested with the office conferred. Thus much concerning Presbyter's argument that ordination confers order, and election office, and therefore that all who belong to the order of presbyters may join in the ordination of ministers of the gospel.

We wish to say a few words respecting the argument from scripture. The reasoning of our brethren from this source, seems to be founded on the high, *jus divinum*, principle, that there is a definite and complete form of government, laid down in the word of God, from which the church has no right to deviate; either by introducing new officers, or judicatories, or by modifying the duties of those therein mentioned. That Presbyter adopts this principle is plain. In his fifth number he says, there are but two grounds on which the office of ruling elder can be maintained, "either of human expediency or of divine warrant. If upon the former, then it is a human device, though a very wise and useful one, and worthy to be retained as a matter of sound public policy. . . . If the ruling elder is not a scriptural presbyter, and his office a divine institution, then of course we claim for him no part of the powers of ordination, or any other presbyterial power; it would be manifestly inconsistent to accord him any, and in this view our constitution has done what it had no right to do, *viz.*, added to the appointments of God, as to the government of the church. If the ruling elder be a scriptural presbyter, and his office a divine institution, then we are bound to take it as we find it instituted according to the fundamental law of

the church, the word of God, without adding to, or taking therefrom, and to accord to it such powers as are there granted, and to withhold none which are not there denied." In remarking on Acts xiv. 23, where it is said that the apostles ordained "elders in every church," he says, if these were all preaching elders, it "is fatal to presbyterianism." Again, "If the ruling elder be not a scriptural presbyter, but a mere layman, an officer of human appointment, why say so, and let him be shorn of all his assumed presbyterial powers as well as a part." We call this the high-toned *jus divinum* principle, not because it asserts the fact that the office of ruling elder existed in the apostolic church, and was expressly instituted by Christ, but because it asserts the absolute necessity of such express appointment; declares that the want of it is fatal to presbyterianism; and that we are bound to have the office precisely as the apostolic churches had it; and that we violate the command of God if we either add to its powers, or detract from them.

The whole argument of Presbyter, on this subject, is founded on the assumption that there is a complete system of government laid down in the scriptures, to which all churches are by divine authority required to conform. We shall show that this is not the ground assumed in our standards, and that it is untenable. There are certain principles in which all presbyterians are agreed, and for which they think they have a clear scriptural warrant. For example, that the apostles had a general superintendence and control over the churches; that they appointed no successors to themselves in that general supervisory office; that they committed the government of the church to presbyters, whom they directed to ordain others to the same office; that of these elders, some ruled while others laboured in word and doctrine; and that in many churches, if not in all, deacons were appointed for the care of the sick and poor; and that the church should act as one, as far as her circumstances will permit. We maintain, therefore, in opposition to prelatists, that there is no scriptural authority for any officer having, as a successor to the apostles, power over many churches; and that every thing we find in scripture is opposed to the establishment of such an office. On the other hand, we contend against Independents and Congregationalists, that the government of the church, the right of discipline and ordination, as well as the authority to preach and administer the sacraments, was committed to

the rulers and not to the members of the church. We maintain that Christ has, in his infinite wisdom, left his church free to modify her government, in accordance with these general principles, as may best suit her circumstances in different ages and nations. Having constituted the church a distinct society, he thereby gave it the right to govern itself, according to the general principles revealed in his word. If it be objected that this leaves many things in our system to rest on no better ground than expediency, that it makes them what Presbyter calls "human devices," the answer is, that if Christ has given his church the power of self-government, what the church does in the exercise of that power, if consistent with his revealed will, has as much his sanction as it well could have under any theory of church government. If Paul says the civil powers are ordained of God, so that they who resist, resist the ordinance of God, although God has not revealed even a general system of civil polity, we see not why the same is not much more true with respect to the church.

That this is the true doctrine on this subject, is evident, in the first place, from the absence of any express command, binding the church in all ages to conform her mode of government in every respect to the example of the apostolic churches. If Christ and his apostles had intended to make such conformity a matter of perpetual obligation, it is fair to presume they would have said so. As they have no where given or intimated such a command, no man has now the right to bind the conscience of God's people in this matter. Again, that the apostles never meant to make their example in all points of this kind, a perpetual law for the church, is plain from the fact that they did not themselves pursue, in all particulars, the same plan in all places. There are some general principles to which they seem to have adhered, but it is far from being certain, or even probable, that all the apostolic churches were organized exactly after the same model. This indeed was hardly possible in that day of inspiration and miraculous gifts, which the Spirit distributed to every man, according to his own will; so that some were apostles, some prophets, some teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. According to another enumeration some were apostles; some prophets; some evangelists; some pastors and teachers; according to still another, some had the gift of prophecy, some that of the ministry;

some that of teaching; others that of exhortation; others that of ruling; and others, that of showing mercy. It is a perfectly gratuitous assumption that these gifts were confined to the presbyters and deacons of the church; and if not so confined, they must have produced a state of things, and a mode of administering the word and ordinances and government of the church, very different from any which is now actual or possible. Again, we know that the apostles were accustomed to go into the Jewish synagogues and preach the gospel; if the majority of the people, with their rulers believed, from all that appears, they left them without any change in their organization. But if "divers were hardened, and believed not," they "departed and separated the disciples." We know that presbyters were ordained in all the churches; and it is probable deacons were also generally introduced, as we know they were at Jerusalem and Phillippi. In addition to deacons, we know that deaconesses were in some instances appointed, but we have no evidence that this was the universal practice. It is a very common opinion that in some churches the teachers were a distinct class from that of preachers and rulers. Again, it is plain that in those places where the number of converts was small, there was but one church under its own bench of elders; but in others, where the disciples were so numerous as to form several congregations, as in Jerusalem and probably in Ephesus, we know not how they were organized. We know they were under the government of presbyters, but whether each congregation had its own bench of elders, as with us, or whether all were under one common body, as in some of the consistorial churches of France, is more than any man can tell. Again, in those places where an apostle permanently resided, as at Jerusalem, it is impossible that the government of the church should not, for the time being, be somewhat modified by that circumstance. An apostle had a right to ordain whom he pleased; he had authority over presbyters; and could exercise discipline in his own name. Considering all these circumstances, we think the conclusion irresistible, that while the apostles adhered to the great principles above referred to, they varied the details of church organization to suit the circumstances of particular places and occasions. If this is true, then of course we are not bound to conform in all points to their example, for their example was not uniform.

That this is the doctrine of our church on this subject, is plain from the express letter of her constitution, and from her practice. We, in common with all other churches, have acted, and must act on this principle. Our constitution declares that synods and councils are an ordinance of God for the government of the church, but for the particular constitution and mutual relation of such councils, she asserts no express command or uniform apostolic usage. It is declared to be "expedient and agreeable to scripture and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the church should be governed by congregational, presbyterial and synodical assemblies. In full consistency with this belief, we embrace in the spirit of charity, those Christians who differ from us, in opinion or practice, on these subjects." Though we have a divine warrant for the government of the church by presbyters, where is our scriptural warrant for our mode of organizing church sessions? Where do we find it said that one presbyter shall be the perpetual moderator of that body? or where is the express warrant for saying that such presbyter must be a minister? Our book says that ruling elders are the representatives of the people, and so, according to our system, they undoubtedly are; but where do the scriptures assign them this distinctive character? It is said the apostles ordained elders in every church, but can we prove that they made one class of those elders any more the representatives of the people, than the other? Again, we have a divine warrant for synods in the general, and for parochial presbyteries in particular, but where is our express warrant for the peculiar organization of our presbyteries? These are not only permanent bodies, but in a great measure self-perpetuating, and are invested with judicial authority over all the parochial presbyteries within their bounds. Admitting that this is not only expedient and agreeable to scripture, which is all our book asserts, but sustained by an express divine warrant, where have we any such warrant for the mode of constituting these bodies? If, as Presbyter maintains, all presbyters have "common presbyterial powers," and if we are forbidden either to add to or detract from those powers, will he please to produce his warrant for saying that *all* the preaching elders within a certain district shall have a seat in presbytery, and only one in three or one in ten of the ruling elders? If all have, by divine right the same powers, will he give us the scriptural authority for making

this distinction? The same questions may be asked with regard to the constitution of our synods, as permanent bodies, excluding two-thirds of our presbyters from any immediate voice in their deliberations, and exercising jurisdiction over all the presbyteries within their bounds.

It appears then the principle on which Presbyter's whole argument is founded is unsound. That principle is that the church is bound to adhere exactly to the model of church government laid down in scripture; and that she is required to produce an express divine warrant for every part of her system; that she is not only barred from creating any new office, but from modifying the rights and duties of those at first established. We maintain, on the other hand, that while there are certain general principles laid down on this subject in the word of God, Christ has left his church at liberty, and given her the authority to carry out those principles. This we have endeavoured to prove from the absence of a command binding the church to exact conformity to the example of the apostles; from the fact that the apostles themselves did not adopt any one unvarying plan of church organization; and from the undeniable fact that every church upon earth, our own among the rest, has acted upon this principle and introduced many things into her system of government for which no express scriptural warrant can be produced. If this is so, then even if it were conceded that all presbyters originally received one ordination, and of course held the same office, of which some discharged one duty and some another, according to their gifts, it would not follow that the church is now bound to concede the same powers and rights to all presbyters, any more than she is to grant them all a seat in presbytery and synod. In other words, the principle now contended for is not only unreasonable, and contrary to the practice of the people of God in all ages, but it cannot be carried through without essentially modifying our whole organization.

There is another view which must be taken of this scriptural argument. It has already been shown not only that the principle on which this argument is founded is untenable, but also that the argument itself is unsound. The argument is—ordination confers order; all therefore who belong to the same order have an equal right to ordain; preaching and ruling elders belong to same order; therefore they have a common right to ordain. We have shown,

that according to our constitution, ordination confers office ; that only those who have the same office have the right of ordaining to that office, and therefore as, under our constitution, the ruling elder does not hold the same office with the preaching elder, nor one that includes it, he has not the right to join in the actual ordination of ministers of the gospel. Both parties to this discussion see and admit, that the only thing that gives it any importance, is the principle involved in it. The real question at issue is, Are ministers and elders to be considered as holding the same office? It is now our object to show that the principles assumed on the other side lead, by a logical necessity, to an affirmative answer to that question, and of course to the abolition of the office of ruling elder, and to the subversion of our constitution.

The principle now assumed is part of a simple, plausible consistent theory of church government, but one very different from ours. That theory is, that the apostles ordained a bench of elders in every church, to whom the whole oversight of its instruction and government was committed; that these elders received the same ordination and held the same office and possessed the same rights and powers; but as some had one gift or talent and some another, it occurred in practice, that only some preached, while others ruled. This difference, however, resulted from no diversity of office, but simply from difference of gifts. All had an equal right to preach and to administer the sacraments as well as to rule. The arguments in support of this theory are derived partly from the usage of the Jewish synagogue, and partly from what is said in the New Testament. Bishops and presbyters are never mentioned together, as though they were different officers, the latter term being used to include all the officers of the church except deacons; Paul addressed the elders of Ephesus as one body, having common responsibilities and duties; in writing to Timothy he gives among the qualifications of elders aptness to teach; he makes no distinction between the two classes, but having said what elders should be, he immediately proceeds to speak of deacons. From these and other circumstances, many have inferred that all presbyters in the apostolic churches had the same office, and the same rights and duties. This was Vitringa's theory; and Presbyter quotes and adopts Vitringa's statements. But Vitringa was a decided opposer of ruling elders as a scriptural office. So in all consistency

must Presbyter be. He is in fact labouring for the abolition of the office.

At the time of the formation of our present constitution, there was one or two prominent men in our church who held the same doctrine, but they were opposed to our whole system, and complained bitterly that the synod insisted on "cramming Scotland down their throats." The late Dr. Jas. P. Wilson was another advocate of this theory; but he was the most zealous opposer of ruling elders our church ever produced. In his work on the "Primitive government of Christian churches," he says one of his principal objects was to show "the illiteracy of making mute elders a characteristic of the primitive church." "Had," he says, "there existed mute elders in the apostolic churches, deacons would have been unnecessary. Elders must 'feed the church,' and be 'apt to teach.'" He everywhere maintains that presbyters had the same office, though they differed in their gifts, graces and talents; some being best qualified for governing, others for exhorting and comforting, and others for teaching. He therefore says that 1 Tim. v. 17, "expresses a diversity in the exercise of the presbyterial office, but not in the office itself."*

We say that Presbyter's principles lead to the abolition of the office of ruling elder, not because others who have adopted those principles have discarded the office, but because such is their logical consequence. He says first, we are bound to have the office precisely as it was at first instituted; and secondly, that all presbyters had a common ordination and common presbyterial powers. If so, we say they had a common office; for how can identity of office be proved if it is not established by common designations and titles, by common duties, by common characteristics and qualifications, and by a common ordination. This is precisely the argument we use against prelatists to prove that bishop and elder have the same office. "Those," says Dr. Owen, "whose names are the same, equally com-

* pp. 282, 283, et passim. Dr. Wilson carried his theory through, so far that he never had any elders in his church. He says, "we ordained deacons and called them elders, for that was the custom." He considered the constitution, ch. xiii. § 2. as giving him this liberty. It is there said, "Every congregation shall elect persons to the office of ruling elder, and to that of deacon, or to either of them." We do not vouch for the fact, but we have often heard it asserted that he never associated his nominal elders with himself in the government of his church, kept no sessional records, or at least never produced them before presbytery.

mon and applicable unto them all, whose function is the same, whose qualifications and characters are the same; whose duties, account and reward are the same, concerning whom, there is, in no place of scripture, the least mention of inequality, disparity or preference in office among them, they are essentially and every way the same." If this argument is good in one case, it is good in another. If it proves that bishops and presbyters had the same office, it certainly proves that all presbyters had also, especially if all had the same ordination. In opposition to all this, the mere fact that some elders preached and some ruled, no more proves diversity of office, than the fact that some bishops taught and others exhorted, that some were pastors and others missionaries, establishes the existence of as many different offices. The legitimate conclusion from these principles is not only that there is no such scriptural office, as that of ruling elder; but that it ought to be abolished.

Another conclusion to which these principles necessarily lead is, that the church session must be invested with the power of ordaining ministers of the gospel. If all presbyters have by divine right equal authority to ordain, and if the session is in fact a presbytery, who has a right to say they shall not exercise a power given them by Christ? It is clear that this is a right that cannot be denied to the session. This is a conclusion from which Presbyter and his friends, we presume, have no disposition to shrink. We see it asserted that no scholar has yet found a single case in the writings of the fathers of the first three centuries, in which the word *presbytery* is used to mean any thing else than the pastors and elders of a particular church;* and hence if the ordinations of that period were presbyterial they were performed by a church session. We are told also that the parochial presbytery or church session of Antioch, deputed Paul and Barnabas on a great mission, "laid their hands upon them," and that these apostles gave account of themselves when they returned.† Now when we remember that Paul received his apostleship neither from men, nor by man; neither by human authority nor by human intervention, but by Jesus Christ; that he constantly denies he received either instruction or authority from the other apostles, and felt it to be so necessary to assert his full equality with those inspired messengers of Christ, that he refused to

* Spirit of the Nineteenth Century, Vol. i. p. 459.

† Do., p. 460

make any report to them, except privately, (Gal. ii. 2) lest he should appear as their deputy; when we consider all this, then we must admit, that if Paul was the missionary of the session of the church of Antioch, there is no presbyterial act to which a session is not competent.

It deserves, however, to be remarked that there does not appear to have been any ruling elders in the church session of Antioch. We read: "There were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, Barnabas" and four others, of whom one was the apostle Paul. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." If this was a church session, it was composed of "prophets and teachers."

Another consequence which has heretofore been drawn from the principles under consideration, and one which it will be found difficult to avoid, is that the parochial presbytery is the only one for which we have any scriptural warrant. This conclusion must be greatly confirmed if the fathers of the first three centuries knew nothing of any other presbytery than the pastor and elders of a particular church. Of course our synods, which are but larger presbyteries, are in the same predicament. But even if the existence of these bodies can, by any ingenuity of logic, be sustained, their composition must be entirely altered. For if all presbyters have by express scriptural warrant the same rights, then, on *Presbyter's* principles, it cannot be allowed that all of one class and only a small portion of the other, should be allowed a seat in those bodies.

We believe, therefore, that it is undeniable that the principles on which *Presbyter* proceeds are subversive of our constitution. The measure now urged is the first step of a revolution; the beginning of the end. The abolition of the office of ruling elder; ordinations by church sessions; the abrogation of our presbyteries and synods, or, at least, their organization on an entirely different plan from that now adopted, we believe to be the logical consequences of this theory. It is only the first step that can be successfully resisted, for if that is granted the whole principle is conceded.

We wish to have it remembered that it is neither the one nor the other of the two leading principles of *Presbyter*,

taken separately, that we regard as of such serious consequence. It is the union of the two; the assertion that we are bound by allegiance to our Lord, to adhere exactly to the usage of the apostolic churches; and in connexion with this the assertion that all presbyters have the same ordination and the same presbyterial powers. The unavoidable conclusion from this latter position, is that all presbyters had in the apostolic churches the same office. The question whether in the beginning the difference between the two classes of presbyters was official or simply de facto; whether the preaching elder was ordained to one office, and the ruling elder to another; or whether both received the same ordination and performed different duties of the same office, according to their several gifts or talents, is a question we have not discussed. It is one, moreover, which our constitution has intentionally left undecided, and is in our view, of very subordinate importance. But if taken in connexion with the principle that we are bound to adhere exactly to the apostolic model, it becomes a vital question, and if decided as it must be on the ground assumed by Presbyter, it must subvert our whole system. For if he first binds us to exact conformity, and then leads us to the conclusion that all the early presbyters had the same office, it follows of course that all our presbyters must have the same office, the same qualifications, the same right to preach and administer the sacraments. If these rights inhere in their office they cannot be taken away. Nor does the authority to exercise them depend upon the election of the people. A man ordained to the office of the gospel ministry, may go where he will, (so he violates no right of others) and act as such. We can on these principles have no ruling elders such as we now have; and all our courts, from the session to the General Assembly, must be composed of ministers; if presbyters hold the same office and are equally entitled to preach as well as rule.

But according to the principle recognised from beginning to the end of our constitution, it matters little how this question about the primitive elders be decided. Christ has not made his grace to depend on the details of external organization; nor has he bound his church to any one exact model of ecclesiastical discipline. If in the early churches it was expedient and easy to have several presbyters in the same church, all clothed with the same office; and if we find it better, in our circumstances, to have one minister, assisted by a bench of elders, we have a divine right so to

order it. If after the manner of the synagogue, there was in every church a presiding officer or bishop, surrounded by other presbyters, authorized either to teach or rule as they had ability, we are obedient to this model, in having a bishop and elders in every congregation, even although the difference between our bishop and elders be now official and not merely a difference of gifts. If it is now difficult to find one preaching presbyter of suitable qualifications for each congregation, while it is easy to get many men of the requisite leisure, wisdom and piety, to join in ruling the house of God, where is the command of Christ that forbids our making a division of labour, and ordaining men to different offices for the discharge of these different duties? This liberty of carrying out and applying the general principles of the scriptures, our church and every other church, has exercised and must exercise. It is a liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and which no man may take away.

Into the historical part of this question, our limits already so inconveniently transcended, forbid us to enter. We believe that it is admitted that the present practice of all the Reformed churches is against the new theory, and of course the measure we are now urged to adopt will raise another barrier between us and all other presbyterian denominations. For some time after the Reformation in Scotland, ruling elders were annually elected; which of itself creates a presumption that they were not considered as having received a common ordination with the ministers of the gospel. The only evidence that they joined in the ordination of ministers that we have seen, amounts to this: Ministers were then ordained with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, elders were members of the presbytery, therefore elders joined in the imposition of hands. Presbyter uses a similar argument in a different case: Timothy was ordained with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, elders were members of the primitive presbyteries, therefore elders laid hands on Timothy. It is easy to reply: Presbyter was ordained with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery; ruling elders are members of our presbyteries; therefore ruling elders laid their hands on Presbyter. This argument is just as conclusive in this last case, as in either of the former. Facts cannot be proved by syllogisms.

The great argument for the right of elders to join in the ordination of ministers, derived from the constitution, is

that ordination is a presbyterial act, to be performed with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, and as elders are members of presbytery they have a right to join in that service. It will be admitted that the constitution is binding in the sense in which it was framed and adopted; and that it is unjust to enforce it in a different sense, even though the words themselves admit of the new construction. If a man in deeding an estate should define its limits inaccurately; if his intention could be clearly ascertained, it would be dishonest in any man, claiming under the deed, to take advantage of the phraseology, and say: There are the words you must abide by them. The real question then is, Did those who framed and those who adopted our constitution, intend by the words referred to, to confer on ruling elders the right to join in the actual ordination of ministers? If they did not, then no righteous claim can be advanced under the clause in question.

That the words of the constitution do not demand this construction, is clear to demonstration. In the Westminster Directory, it is said, "The presbytery, or the ministers sent by them for ordination,* shall solemnly set him apart to the office and work of the ministry by laying their hands on him," &c. Yet the Directory repeatedly asserts that the imposition of hands in ordination belongs to "the preaching presbyters orderly associated." This Directory was the rule of discipline in our church at least from 1729 to 1788, when the new constitution was adopted; and from this source the *usus loquendi* of our formularies has been principally derived. Who then can believe that a form of expression, which in that book has confessedly one meaning, must of necessity in ours have a different? According to all ordinary rules of inference, we should conclude that the same phrase was to be taken in the same sense, in two works so nearly related.

Again, it is not more certain that ordination is an act of the presbytery, than that admission to the privileges of the church is an act of the session. Yet ruling elders though members of the session cannot actually introduce a man into the church by baptism. In like manner though members of the presbytery they cannot actually ordain. In both cases their concurrence is necessary in deciding on the

* As the Directory permitted ordination to be performed by a committee, it says, The presbytery, or the ministers sent for ordination, &c.

fitness of the candidate ; but the executive act, belongs to the ministry. These considerations at least, prove that the language of the constitution does not demand the construction now put upon it. That it was not intended to be so construed, is proved from two sources, the language of the book in the immediate context and in other places ; and from the uniform practice of the church. The constitution speaking of the ordination of ministers says : "The presiding minister shall, by prayer, and with the laying on the hands of the presbytery, according to the apostolic example, solemnly ordain him to the office of the gospel ministry." All the members of the presbytery, it is then directed, shall take him by the right hand saying, in words to this purpose, "we give you the right hand of fellowship to take part of this ministry with us." Of the words here used, the terms minister and ministry have a fixed and uniform meaning in our standards ; they always mean minister of the gospel and his office. They must therefore have that meaning here. The term *member*, may be used either for any person having a right to sit in the body, or for one of its permanent constituent members. The expression "all the members" may mean either all without distinction, or all of a particular class. What the sense is, the context must determine. When it is said that the synod shall be opened with a sermon "by the moderator, or in case of his absence, by some other member ;" "some member" can only mean "some member" competent to the duty, some preaching member. In like manner when it said "all the members" shall take the newly ordained minister by the hand, it can only mean all the members who are authorized to say, Take part of this ministry with us ; which no man but a minister can say.

What, however, we should think, ought to put all controversy on this subject out of the question, is the uniform practice of the church. For when the question concerns the intention of the framers of a document, their uniform practice is decisive ; because it is absolutely incredible that the framers of our constitution should deliberately intend to express one thing, and yet uniformly act as though they meant a different. We do not see how any man can believe that the authors of our book and the presbyteries in adopting it, should purpose to make an important change in the usage of the church, yet in no case act upon that intention ; that no historical evidence should exist of such a purpose ; and that those who were active in drawing up

the constitution should all say they had no such thought, and never heard of any body else having it. We do think such a thing never happened since the world began. Men can hardly intend a thing without knowing it. This mode of interpreting a constitution in opposition to the manifest intention of those who framed it, and of those whose adoption of it gave it force, must destroy it. The same argument on which so much stress is now laid, would prove that a ruling elder might be the moderator of any our judicatures, and consequently open the session with a sermon. The book says, a member shall preach, elders are members, therefore elders may preach.

We conclude by repeating, that the mere imposition of hands by elders, in the case of the ordination of a minister, is a matter of no importance. If understood as a solemn manner of expressing their assent to his ordination, it would be not only harmless, but decorous. It is the principle on which the change is urged that gives the question weight. That principle is felt on both sides to be important; and it is important, because it must work a change in our whole system. If this change is to be made, it ought to be effected in the way prescribed for altering the constitution, and not by the introduction of a single measure, which unsettles every thing and settles nothing.