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ART. I.—PRIMITIVE GREEK RELIGION.

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THE earliest traceable link between the Greek Mythology and the primitive Patriarchal Monotheism must be looked for in the grove of Dodona, on the Western coast, afterwards called Epirus. Long before the war of Troy, a Deity was worshipped there of whom Homer seems to speak with awe, as of one belonging to an antiquity transcending the theology of his day, and whose religion carried with it a more hoary sacredness: "O Dodonæan, Pelasgian, Zeus, *τηλόθει ναίων*—*αιθέρι ναίων*—dwelling afar, dwelling on high." It seems to convey the idea of something separate, holy, unapproachable. There were two peculiar features in this very early Dodonæan religion. One was the worship of Zeus alone, as unassociated with any other divinity; the other, the esteemed sacredness of the oak. Both testify to its primitive character. As far as can be known this feeling of regard for the oak never degenerated into an idolatry of its object, although it early became the vehicle and fosterer of a gloomy superstition. It gave character to this primitive oracular seat, and inspired that marked reverence for it which is so evident in the Homeric and the earliest Grecian poetry. It is certain that, from the first, a great impression had been made by something in the history and in the local surroundings of Dodona. The seat of the oracle was, originally, not a temple but a grove. Natural causes here, as well as elsewhere, lent

erican scholars, he is best fitted to do, in which in truth he is above comparison. We refer to an English bibliography by subjects, giving the works as well as the names of authors; this would for many, if not most, students, be quite as useful as a bibliography under the names of authors. But we are proposing, it may well be suggested, what no one man in a long life-time could accomplish. This may be true; but Dr. Watt devoted two volumes of his "Bibliotheca" to this part of the work. A new attempt can only be made by some one who has the requisite knowledge, resources and industry,—by a bibliographical genius. And such is Dr. Allibone. A really great bibliographer comes hardly once in a generation; and he should make the most of himself, for he is the helper of many generations.

ART. IX.—TENURE OF THE ELDER'S OFFICE.

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The Ruling Elder is an officer of the Presbyterian Church. In this capacity he is a representative of the people, and more. He has a gift from God, on which the office is founded; this gift has been formally recognized in his call to the exercise of its functions; these functions have been, of course, inaugurated by the authority of God; this authority binds him in the formula of solemn vows; and these vows are always indefinite as to the time of their continuance. Such must be said of any New Testament office that is ordinary and perpetual in the church. The faithful exercise of its functions must be a bounden duty, lasting as the gift itself. As the incumbent himself may not, without censure, put his gift in abeyance, so may not the people he serves limit or abridge, by any vote of theirs, what God has commissioned, without limitation of time. If both these parties, the officer and the people, concur in the divestment, there is a third party whose approval must be had, the Author of the gift and Founder of the office. His intervention is found only

in one or both of two ways—providence and discipline—the hand of God interposing a disqualification, or the ordinance of God ascertaining a forfeiture, by reason of offence. These are the principles which belong to all the ordinary ascension gifts of our Lord. And there is not in all his word an example of office for a term of years, according to the mere conventionalities of men.

If these conventionalities, not daring wholly to dispense with what the Head of the Church has instated, will venture to void his appointment, indirectly and partially, saying to the officer he gave, Thus long shall you exercise your gift, and no longer, without our ballot, they arrest a divine commission, put in chains the gift of God, compel the incumbent to stop in his faithfulness, and render useless, at their pleasure, what was appointed to be used above and beyond the mere pleasure of man.

But it is objected: this officer is a representative of the people, and as such must return to them for a renewal of their suffrage, at regular intervals. We answer, that so is the teaching elder himself a representative of the people; if we take the consistent view, that his great commission rests on the bosom of the Church, rather than a line of individual men, which must be historically traced and blindly believed in, when the track is invisible. It is not necessary that a true representative be more than once elected by the people's vote, and more especially when he is one of themselves, in his pursuits and sympathies and local connections. There have been truly, as well as nominally, representative men who were never elected formally by the votes of their constituents. Indeed, the frequent election of a true representative only tends to reduce the high character of representation, in which the man answers to his own conscience in serving the people, to that of the mere delegate or deputy, whose conscience the people must have to reflect themselves, alone.

In view of all these principles, there is not only no warrant for making any spiritual office a rotary one; but no reason or making the ruling elder, and not the teaching elder also,

a rotary one. And, as we may see in a subsequent paragraph, there is even less warrant, and far less expediency, in making the ruler a rotation in the church, than making "those who labor in the word and doctrine" a rotation and itinerancy; as in the Wesleyan system.

2. As an officer of the church, he is properly called *Elder*. Otherwise he has no name, and no list of qualifications in Scripture. The qualifications are enumerated distinctly, in Titus i. 6-9; compared with 1 Tim. iii. 2-7. The first thing which strikes us in this enumeration is, the little stress that is laid on oratorical qualifications. From the calling of Aaron to this present day, the need of these has been the chief requirement in the preacher; and if preachers are the only kind of elders ordained in the New Testament Church, it is inexplicable that almost nothing is said in the most formal account of qualifications we have here, of ability and soundness and zeal, in "the word and doctrine." The forecast of inspiration must have seen, what is realized more and more as the culture of the world advances and the relations of religion are multiplied, that "the word" would be all-embracing, and the qualification of its teachers would engross the learning and skill and persuasion of "the eloquent orator," as chief characteristics in the distinct institution of his office. Accordingly, we find in the pastoral epistles, and elsewhere, a plenary and diversified requirement, of fitness for the work of public instruction, and pastoral administration of the ordinances in every way; predicated of the minister as an evangelist, messenger, ambassador, steward, preacher, pastor, teacher, workman, etc.; but not as an elder; and, as elder and bishop are used interchangeably for the same office, not even as a bishop. And why not? Unless we make the elder generic, embracing two classes, or one large class, with a portion of it distinguished from the others by a specified particularity, we have no satisfactory answer. Elders are not furnished with the distinctive qualification of preachers.

But, on the supposition that the Scottish reformers, in framing the Second Book of Discipline, and the Westminster Divines, not to speak of subsequent interpreters beyond

number, within and without the Presbyterian communion, have rightly accepted the notable text, 1 Tim. v. 17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine," as indicating two classes of elders, we can turn to the catalogue of an elder's qualifications, with clear understanding that it belongs to the root or trunk of a great office, which has two branches, and see at once how fairly our ruler is called an elder, and why so little is said, and that so vaguely, respecting the elder's endowment for public ministrations of the word. "Apt to teach," in the sense of the original, may be taken either actively or passively, (see 2 Tim. ii. 24,) and mean either public and formal, or private and social teaching; and thus be generalized, as the word elder itself. So also, the corresponding requirement in Titus i. 9, "Able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." The deacon Stephen could do this.

The ruler is necessarily a teacher, to some extent, in the Christian Church. As all his authority is declarative alone, and its enforcement consists in the application of divine words to the offences of men, from the first admonition to the last excommunication, he must be a teacher, in one important sense, at least. And then, the use of the keys by the bench of authority, in every particular church, in admitting and excluding members, must make every man on the bench a catechist, and of course a teacher; so that ruling includes teaching, as certainly, if not as much, as teaching includes ruling. These two elements, in different proportions, are found inseparably connected, in each of the two branches, called the teaching and the ruling elder; and all the qualifications of an elder, found in the Scriptures, belong to these two in common, and characterize the genus of this institution in the Church of Christ.

This ruler comes fairly by the name of elder, not merely in coming to the only enumeration of his qualities, found in the New Testament, which are expressly those of an elder; but also by an original claim, in which the teaching elder himself derives from him the title. The church of the Old Testament

handed this denomination to the New. And it is remarkable that, while we have the other officers, both ordinary and extraordinary, indicated at their beginning, in the New we have no formal institution of the eldership; and read nothing about Christian elders until we find Paul and Barnabas ordaining a plurality of them in every church. At the very time of these ordinations, the new church was full of preachers, who had been sent by a Pentecostal commission; which would last only as long as the extraordinary gifts continued. At the cessation of such gifts, we have the inspired apostle directing the deputies he sent, to "set in order the things that are wanting," to devolve the permanent instruction of the church and the world upon this old ecclesiastical institute; whose original occupation was mainly that of ruling; whose province in the apostolic age was rather to judge of others that came to exercise their gifts among the people; and whose office in its very nature implied the exercise of teaching, which was to be made more or less prominent and signal, as the exigencies of the church would call for this gift, and classify its functions, from age to age. The ruling elder is then the aboriginal elder; the teaching elder inherits from him; the supervenient commission, to "preach the gospel to every creature," which now calls for those of his class that the Spirit and Providence of God assign to the ministry of the word, cannot, obviously, either annihilate the residuary bench, or take away its name; which has been as a thread of unity for the visible church through three dispensations.

Now, in all this indefeasible right of the ruling elder to the name by which we familiarly call him, we may see how unwarrantable it is to make him temporary in the term of his office; and compel him, and not the teaching elder, to suspend the operations of what God has endowed him with, at the arbitrary dictation of man's will, as to the number of months he shall be permitted to work. It is to make empirical what God has made old and stable. It is to make a ball at the feet of popular whimsey, what God has made a rock for the surges to break on. It is to root up every planting which our fathers have made, in the fundamental warrant for

the office itself, and expose to every vicissitude of wind and weather, what the mere idea of lay representation will never suffice to protect and perpetuate, as an office in the church. The question must go to the foundation of this office.

3. The ruling elder is a local officer. He does not belong to the church at large, as the teaching elder does, by virtue of the great commission, devolved on him especially, to preach the gospel to every creature. Although as representative, appointed from time to time, he may appear beyond his place, to exercise authority in jurisdiction over a wider field than that of a particular church, his power of order, as distinguished from that of jurisdiction (which is the power of assemblies), cannot be carried beyond the boundary of one particular congregation. This localization of the office we have in every hint of elders in Scripture; which speaks of a plurality ordained, as often as it speaks of any special organization. "In every church," Acts xiv. 23. "In every city," Titus i, 5. "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church," Acts xx. 17. "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons," Phil. i. 1. Accordingly our own book, Form of Government, chapter 13th, section 2, requires that, in all cases, persons elected to this office be "male members in full communion in the church in which they are to exercise their office." And again, section 6, it speaks of the ruling elder as belonging to the particular church he serves, "the congregation to which he belongs." We never speak of the teaching elder in this way, as belonging to one congregation, however much it may be identified with his name. He, in distinction, belongs to the whole Church of Christ. In the nature of things, a ruling elder is local, as a teaching elder is not. The art of government is so particular in dealing with the circumstances of individuals and communities, the traditions, usages, prejudices and pursuits of the governed, that the elder who rules well in one church may be entirely unfit to rule in another. The teacher may instruct that one as well as he might a hundred others; while as a ruler he can guide and govern it as he could no other in the whole visible church. Hence the

silence of our Book on the installation of Ruling Elders; that is, the reinstatement in some particular place, of one who is already an officer, without the actual exercise of his functions, in any special relation. It evidently identifies, in their case, the solemnities of ordination and installation under the phrase "set apart." These elders are no longer set apart when they cease to act, by some formal regulation of the church. The express mention of installation, in the case of teaching elders, makes it more certain that no such distinct solemnity was intended in the case of ruling elders. And any partial action of the General Assemblies, in legislating on this subject, without reference to the Presbyteries by overture, must of course fail to modify the organic law, by which we now study this important office.

It follows fairly, that the specious plea for setting aside periodically the acting elder, that he is not divested of office, but only relieved of its duties for a time, to be installed without ordination again, if desired by the people, is of no force, having no foothold in our constitution. The letter is violated, without a color of relief, in following the spirit of our Book. Rotation to the local elder is blank divestment. The gift of God to a particular church, and not to the church at large, is thrown aside, under a pretext of transferability, which has no existence in the nature of the thing, either to another place, or another time in the same place. We have no "Grand Consistory," to which we may turn over an elder of whom the people are tired, and recall him to counsel and action, on special occasions, like that of choosing a pastor for the people. This, in a measure, saved the Reformed Church of Holland from the miserable fiction of law to which we must resort when we deprive the elder of his ministry, without even ostensible cause, and cheat the sensibilities of his nature, and the solemnities of his consecration, with the subtlety of a spiritual character, which is said to remain indelibly under a total repression of its functions.

Our own admirable form of government, chap. 13, specifies the only case in which one who is not an acting elder can be considered an elder at all; and it is a transaction within the

session itself. And it is for good cause, shown upon a record, when he is willing, and a semi-judicial process besides when he is unwilling to retire. Summary as it may seem, it is a process open and equitable, initiated by his peers, and enforced by a superior court; an eminently Presbyterian way, in singular contrast with the loose Congregational method, now permitted to supersede it, in which the people are at once accusers, witnesses, and judges; removing him from office without a record, or a libel, or a process, other than what is hidden in their ballot-box. The enforced demission of his office in this way, by a tribunal which has no responsibility for its acts, may be a life-long punishment for a mere inadvertence of good intentions and good capability in office. The best of ruling elders may serve them only for a definite time, and yet be punished by them through indefinite duration. A term of two or three years will measure his probation, and a life time afterwards will be required to measure the penalty which their displeasure inflicts, alike on great offences and small. Truly, this rotary system is a turning of things upside down! A life service they call "iron-clad tyranny;" but a life suspension of God's own officer, at the whim of the people, they call "liberty" and "progress!"

4. The local officer needs, more than any other, permanence of tenure in the exercise of his functions. The teaching elder, who is general in the commission he holds, and its relation to the Church, is given "wholly" to the work of his office. But the ruling elder, whose calling in office confines him to a particular church, does not "live of the gospel," in his separation to its service; and must follow the ordinary industries of life for a living. Consequently, he requires much longer time to study the nature and duties of the office. Called to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," by the work of his hands, he is called to a duration of time in the tenure of office, which must be long in its lapse as it is narrow in its space; or, in other words, continued in its term, as it is contracted in its leisure and opportunity. Otherwise, its demands on fidelity and skill would be unreasonable. Hence the Second Book of Discipline, which has

been the "Book of Policy," for almost 300 years, in all the Presbyterian bodies of Scotland and Ireland, so wisely provided, along with a life-tenure of the office, that the ruling elders might relieve one another interchangeably "as was among the Levites under the law in serving of the temple." This provision had no sense in it, if the strange interpretation forced upon this Book at present, by the advocates of "term service," be admitted.

Thorough and mature study of this office, in its exercise, as well as its nature and warrant, must be acknowledged as indispensable. Every particular church has an individuality of life and character, by which it is distinguished from all others, even of the same neighborhood and name. It has traditions of its own, antecedent impress of its ministry, characters among its people, affinities and feuds, changes of surrounding influence, experiences of inner life; and, even if but newly organized, the derivation of its elements, and tendencies with which they are gathered together; and all these must be well known, or that church cannot be well governed. And it is seldom that the teaching elder adequately understands these things, in his habits of study and associations remote from the cares and occupations which mould his people. As a matter of fact, his attempt to govern at all, with the exercise of discipline, usually results in ousting himself from the place; wherever he has no bench of elders, wiser than himself, to know the place and the people by a long identification with their families and pursuits. The most stupid and stubborn elder at his side, who has the experience, may be an oracle to save him. And are we now to consider such experience of no value? Shall the most difficult of all arts in the world, and unspeakably more difficult in the church than in the world, that of governing minds, be now rolled out from its time-honored shelter, to be hackneyed on the level to which liberty for the sake of liberty is dragging church and state, with contempt for age and experience up-lifted, as the chief livery in its drive?

We had hoped to find in our bench of ruling elders, the great expediency of our system for this age, and its progress

in every way ; the ruler, who, as the Second Book of Discipline said, "sould be cairfull in seiking the fruit" of what the pastor has sown ; the teacher, who would guide the intermediate instruction between pastor and people, without which no congregation will thrive, and with which, under the name of class-leader, the Methodist Church has covered the land. The Sabbath-school visitor, also, to see that the covenanted family is there, and that household religion is not lost in the communism which reduces every day the solid religion of our fathers to a superficial flippancy, on which Presbyterianism will perish. In short, we had long dreamed, fondly and confidently, that our "seniors of the people," with their life-long education and treasured wisdom, kept aloof by our constitution from the intrigues and mutations of political canvass, would be the fixed feature which could turn to everything that turns, with all the versatility that is safe, and be itself a stake which will never be removed. But the triumph of a rotary system, over the letter and spirit of of our Book, dashes the dream and darkens our hopes.

5. Discipline, as an ordinance of God, is compromised and avoided by such a change. Of course, as we have seen already, discipline over elders themselves, for unfaithfulness in office, will be at an end, so far as its regular and equitable forms are concerned. Indeed, the trouble of this, even the slight formality required in our Book, to rid a particular church of an unacceptable elder, by the action of the session itself, is avowed as one of the reasons for making chap. 13, sec. 6 and 7, a dead letter. The moral cowardice which evades an ordinance of God, because it is an inconvenience at all, must augur badly for the conservation of any other ordinance. Far as a weakness of this kind may be at present from the men who champion this innovation, it will hardly be denied that in every corner the wishes which propagate an interest on this behalf, are excited more or less by the example of some ugly and impracticable elder, whom they would rather roll back on the people than lead out of office, by the door of our constitution.

And yet, this very man, by the life tenure he has had, may

have a memory of the utmost value to the session and people, if not the pastor, he troubles. We know that cases of discipline are nearly always long; equity and mercy themselves prolonging them. And more than the steps of process, which are righteously slow, the effects on offenders, the fruits meet for repentance, to justify the restoration of the erring, must have long time to evince their true nature. One case, at least, is known to the writer, which lasted thirty years in one particular church, and came to an ultimate issue, that was wise and just, only by the counsel of an elder who had been thirty-five years on that bench. It was an important case, which would have been utterly marred by the rolling stone that is now set in motion.

But discipline is also delicate, as it is chronic. Few cases can be managed well without retreating far from the gaze of a crowd; "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." It is the beauty of our bench that it wears a veil which no congregational meeting could put on. But if its consecrated judges must come down, every two or three years, to the canvass of a popular election, must there not be a rude revelation of every case for the scrutiny of voters? Just as often as that election returns must come a ventilation, at the pleasure of the people, of what will not fail to destroy in the exposure many a fair and gentle administration of an ordinance truly divine.

And who, among the best qualified men for such administration, will then be willing to undertake it? No fact is more familiar, in our best churches now, than the difficulty of persuading the right men to accept this appointment. Even its sheltered responsibilities, with the longest guaranty of time to learn them, weigh heavily on the sensibilities of good men. But if it be known that experience may be nipped in the bud, and before he has time to correct a mistake, he may be thrust aside, by a popular vote, as incompetent or unfaithful, who will venture on the precarious honor? Who will not prefer to remain among the people, a true congregationalist, where the rulers abide; when our *ruling* elders are in reality the *ruled* elders; and the very title of this noble office turns

to a positive misnomer? We mourn the almost universal aversion of our well-qualified countrymen to suffer nomination for offices of state; because the passage must be made so often through the buffetings of popular election. How much more must we come to grief, in the house of God, to see the meritorious decline a spiritual office on the same account, and the charlatan, who is ambitious and vain in proportion as he has not the gift, bear the keys and represent the people.

6. These principles and reasons of expediency, among many others which might be mentioned, may at least incline us to believe that our Book means what it says, when it declares the office is "perpetual and cannot be laid aside at pleasure. No person can be divested—but by deposition." And then, to make it, if possible, stronger, we have an exception following, to confirm the rule, giving every church a safe and liberal provision against the evil of an incapable and unacceptable elder, Chap. 13th. Prof. Hamilton, in this REVIEW, of October last, while advocating a change of our constitution, demonstrated unanswerably the necessity of this, by showing how plainly the "time service" is inconsistent with the Book as it now stands. To say that the word "mode" means time, in the 2d section, because, forsooth, it happened accidentally in 1835 that an inadvertent writer of the Assembly's minute, that year, condemning the rotary system as unconstitutional, said it was not the right *mode*, is about the most marvellous criticism ever made on our venerable constitution. And why not argue from the same minute, that the word "perpetual," taken from our Book, must mean a life tenure, as that writer used it to mean?

Over and over again, it has been settled in our courts, that *mode* is something different from *time*. In one church the existing elders nominate and recommend persons to be chosen as additional; and in another this will not be allowed by the people. In one church only the heads of families have been allowed to vote in the election of elders; and in another, all the communicants are allowed. In one, males only; in another, females as well. This is "mode," left to the will and usage of the churches. Let John Knox himself speak to

these brethren a word on the subject, as they are still quoting his obsolete First Book of Discipline, for the law of the church; allowing us to translate his orthography a little. "Their election shall be yearly, where it may be conveniently observed. How the votes and suffrages may be best 'resavit' with every man's freedom in voting, we leave to the judgment of every particular kirk." Here is authority from the beginning for distinguishing, *when and how*, "time service" from the "mode" of election.

But even were we to concede that these two very different things are jumbled in our Book of Government, as well as Minutes of the Assembly, shall we beg the question, that "mode" may mean this thing as well as another, in order to set aside the most explicit and precise words of law in the Constitution?

7. We are told, however, that back of the constitution are usages in all times and all countries, from which Presbyterians came, to form our government of the church; and these must be assumed as interpreters, to prove that our Book does not mean what it says so plainly; because it did not expressly forbid those antecedent customs. Admitting for a moment, that such contrary usages did exist as asserted, must a new symbolic formula, in a new country, and among new institutions of civil government, be constrained forever to abide under old and superseded senses, because these are not specifically annulled in the instrument itself? "Offer it now unto thy governor." Try it on the constitution of the United States, or any other civil ordinance of organic law, and see how futile this pretence must appear. It is legislative, and not constitutional statute, that is wont to abolish expressly what had been to the contrary before.

But the assertion of such antecedent usage must be denied. English speaking Presbyterians came to this country, and constructed our constitution, with a life tenure in the ruling eldership, as the universal usage of them and their fathers for seven generations, before we had a General Assembly. The First Book of Discipline for the Church of Scotland is, without exception, among historians,

considered a mere experiment, a temporary expedient, "to begin with," prepared by six ministers, during the sessions of the first General Assembly, December, 1560. The only sanction it ever had, either in church or state, was the irregular subscription of its authors, personally, and others, ministers and laymen, who favored reform. That it was adopted by the General Assembly itself, is only a matter of conjecture, not of record. And this is the only document to be found in all Scottish history which favors a periodical election of elders by the people, as it was done by the Council at Geneva; "tinged with the times," and confessedly crude and imperfect in many of its provisions.

The great "Book of Policy for the Kirk" was the Second Book of Discipline, the only true development of Presbyterianism; as it arose from the cradle of the first Reformation, as it grew up to be confirmed at the second Reformation, as it settled down, with the sanction of an empire, in the "Revolution Settlement" of 1690. Unlike the First Book, the Second was one of long deliberation, through successive Assemblies, three at least; committed to seventeen of the best ecclesiastics in Europe, one of whom, John Row, had been ten years at Rome, renowned even at the Papal court for his unrivalled skill in canon law. Every circumstance about this book makes it the original, independent and perfect masterpiece of the Presbyterian system. To say, as has been said of late, that the Second Book was intended to be no more than "explanatory" of the first, on certain points, is an amazing contradiction of the facts, which are patent in history. To say that the Scottish people could not have permitted, without struggle or protest, the work of John Knox, within six years of his death, to be overturned or discarded, is to speak against that reformer himself, who favored the preparation of another book; and to overlook the palpable changes, confessedly made in many another part of his own book; such as the abolition of superintendents, the restoration of "laying on of hands" in ordination, and the rescue of the ministry from a censorship by the elders and deacons over the pastor himself, which the first book had ordered.

Now, the following items are precisely the words of this great book (in our spelling) on the tenure of office by the ruling elder.

“4. Their office, as it is ordinary, so is it perpetual, and always necessary in the kirk of God.

“5. The eldership is a spiritual function, as is the ministry.

“6. Elders once lawfully called to the office, and having gifts from God, meet to exercise the same, may not leave it again.

“7. Albeit such a number of elders may be chosen in certain congregations, that one part of them may relieve another for a reasonable space, as was among the Levites under the law in serving of the temple.”

Our limited space compels us to leave out other parts of the chapter (6th), which only reflect a stronger light upon the truth of our interpretation, if any interpretation is needed.

If a life tenure of office be not implied in item 4, as above, then there is a mere tautology in its diversified phrases, unworthy of the penmen, inconsistent with the style of the whole Book, and which the committee were expressly charged by the Assembly to avoid. Yet, according to the advocates of a rotary eldership, each of the three phrases mean exactly the same thing, that the office itself only is permanent in the church! Of course, the same phrases, elsewhere used of preaching elders, must mean the same thing: that theirs is not investment for life. Unfortunately, however, for this late-learned construction, we have the original Minutes of that General Assembly, in which this Book was finally adopted, 1578. Though the ravages of Adamson's hand, Bishop of St. Andrews, tore away leaves from that ancient manuscript, enough is left to give us the key which we are seeking for now. As we read the transactions of the Assembly, in adopting the Book, we come to this 6th chapter, and find that the honest Clerk calls it and the action thereon, “The perpetuitie of *the persones of the elders* aggriet conforme,” etc. If this caption by the Clerk, approved by the Assembly, has any meaning at all, it is that a life tenure was the main thing of interest and change on the head of the eldership: perpetuity

in *persons* as well as offices. See Acts of the Assembly, published by the Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1840, as well as the Booke of the Universall Kirk.

But even this cleric signal, so conclusive in itself, is not needed to assure us of what we have asserted elsewhere, that the obvious meaning is the true meaning of the words. We have the fact of a life tenure traced back indefinitely; and no man can tell when it began or how, unless we say that it began with this Book, in 1578. The world knows that the track of Scottish Church history is not a blind one. We have the fact also that successive departures from the Kirk of Scotland by seceding bodies, were all, as Dr. McCrie, the great historian affirms, for the purpose of returning honestly and rigidly to this Book of Discipline, as well as doctrinal purity. And the world knows, the seceders have zealously and without exception adhered to this permanent tenure of elders. And, to crown all, we have the great manual of Scottish ecclesiastical lawyers, Steuart of Pardovan, without one word concerning a rotary eldership, and with many a word implying life tenure. If we have the disadvantage of proving a negative, we have a pile of negations, which need hardly be continued, against a bald assertion, so new and unfounded.

And what if Scottish history should afford the sparse and sporadic acts of Assembly, which are cited to sustain the assertion, that annual or quadrennial elections continued after the Second Book of Discipline, and under its operation? Does that prove the rotary system to have been the regular one, against the face of that venerated Book, any more than the extraordinary vote of our late Assembly proves to posterity, that now, and ever since we had an American book, formed on its model, we must have had a similar mode of turning in and out our elders, at the pleasure of the people?

But no such acts are to be found. It is not shown, and cannot be shown, that any act of the Scottish Assembly ever attempted or allowed any other kind of rotation, than that alternate working and resting which item "7," quoted above, from the Book of Discipline, allowed, as an arrangement among the elders themselves. This, of course, implied a per-

manency of tenure, and no return to the people for votes. Abuses doubtless crept in from time to time, and the correction of these, by successive Assemblies, comprehends everything that the acts cited by Messrs. Moore and Agnew can purport. Never did the Church of Scotland have a rotary eldership, after she tried it for eighteen years at the confused beginning of her structure. Never had the Second Book of Discipline any other to succeed it or modify it, in one iota, (the Westminster Directory being essentially coincident), until 1842; and the slight modification, explanatory and particular, made in that year, was certainly not in the direction of this new system. Why was not this last action, confirmed constitutionally, cited at all? And here we must pause, with deep regret and humiliation, to notice what has probably never had a parallel on the pages of this journal, or the floor of our General Assembly, in the perversion of historical facts, for the apparent purpose of gaining a victory. That "Act of 1705," which has been flaunted so conspicuously and often, by both the debaters referred to, does not contain one word in favor of election, and much less periodical election, by the people! It is the eldership that is to nominate and choose elders; and the only vote of the people mentioned is "tacit consent thereto." When elections in this way, adding some new men to the existing session, had become "annual," it was advised that this be "rectified," and that "new elections of elders, expressed in cases of great necessity, should only be within the compass of four years, and that especially in burghs where there are plenty of persons to choose upon." All this to regulate the elders themselves, in adding more men or new men to the bench, without one hint of rotation, or election by the people, in the whole document!

And what have we had, both written and spoken, by Messrs. Moore and Agnew, respecting this so-called "Act of 1705?" That it is "law," "nine years" in preparation, and "finally ratified by the Assembly, 1705;" that it is "the third Book;" "New Book of Discipline," "answering to our Form of Government and Book of Discipline combined;"

binding until 1771," "never repealed;" "Dr. Milligan tells me it never was repealed," etc. Now will the church listen to us, when we declare, that the whole thing is *apocryphal*? It is even so! There is no such "act," no such "book." If the "Revised Book of Discipline" gotten up by the Old School General Assembly, through their committee, continued from 1857 to 1864, had happened to be spread on the Minutes of the Assembly, when reported, or published in the Appendix, by order of the Assembly, without one enacting clause ever appearing on the records, and should now or hereafter be quoted as "law," etc., it would be just the illustration we need, to express the truth in regard to this vaunted document. There is no such law. Well might the honored delegate from the established Church of Scotland tell Mr. Agnew it was never repealed; for it was never enacted.

The document is indeed published, along with the laws of the Scottish church, but it is accompanied with the following "Advertisement": "These overtures were never read in the General Assembly, nor any of the Commissions thereof, only revised by committees; so that the same is not to be looked upon as the deed of the Church of Scotland, nor any judicatory therein; and yet it may be very useful for advice and direction, though not as a binding rule; and, no doubt, it will have weight with many, as having come through the hands of so many learned, judicious, grave, and pious ministers, who have been at great pains in the matter," etc. This preface goes on to say that portions of it had never been sent down to the Presbyteries at all, and never had appeared in print before. See "Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland," published under "the superintendence of the Church Law Society, Edinburgh, 1843."

Again, Mr. Agnew is reported assaying, after Mr. Moore had in effect written the same thing, "The Second Book of Discipline adds still further, 'their election shall be yearly, where it may be conveniently observed.'" Where did these brethren find their Second Book of Discipline? Why torture and misrepresent the glorious old covenanted Book of the Melvilles, etc., in a cause of such "doubtful disputation" as the

defeat of that complaint before them? No such passage, nor anything like it, is to be found in manuscript, print, or even misprint of that standard! Our brethren have allowed themselves to be deceived and misled by Heylin, a mendacious calumniator of the Presbyterian Church. He, and Spottiswoode, and others, were always artfully jumbling the First and Second Books together, that they might make an image, part iron and part clay, for the mark of their obloquy.

Again, we are told, "There was not a Presbyterian church in all the old world but practised the mode of holding periodical elections." Of course, the speaker meant elections of elders *by the people*, periodically. Now, we assert, that throughout "all the old world," in all its ages, there never was such a plan as this rotary system, just inaugurated in our church, save the transient experiment at Geneva and Edinburgh, under a theocratic dream of Calvin and Knox. We might add to this exception a few independents in England, contrary to the averment of Mr. Moore. Dr. John Owen, the giant among them, speaking of them, says, "Others also have given advantage by making this office annual or biennial, in them that are chosen unto it; which, though they plead the necessity of their churches for, as not having persons meet for this work and duty, who are willing to undertake it constantly during their lives, without such a contribution for their maintenance as they are not able to afford; yet the wisest of them do acknowledge an irregularity in what they do, and wish it remedied." Let these words of the greatest light in the 17th century be well weighed by our churches. They have many edges, and are a significant warning. Owen's works, vol. 19, p. 535.

There is not a particle of evidence that the Waldenses and the Bohemian Brethren ever chose their elders in this way. On the contrary, our own Dr. Baird, for many reasons the best authority on the subject, says of the Waldenses, "The elders are first nominated by the congregation, and then elected by the consistory;" not elected by the people at all, even at the first, and much less every one, two, or three years. We have seen already, that the churches of the Reformed (Dutch) have

always had a salvo in their system, which makes it entirely different from this innovation of ours, in having another bench, to which ex-elders may be transferred, and where they may act as officers on occasion.

And let us now look honestly at "the martyr Church" of France, that carried its model to South Britain and wherever else it was scattered by the sword of persecution. Quick's Synodicon, vol. 1. gives us "The Discipline of the Reformed Churches of France," from which we quote: "CHAPTER 3rd, of Elders and Deacons, CANON 1. In those places where the order of our discipline is not yet set up, elders and deacons shall be chosen by the joint suffrages of pastors and people; but where it hath been already established, the power of choosing them shall reside in the consistory (session) together with the pastors, and they shall be nominated with an audible voice in the said consistory, that they may know in what business they are to be employed. . . ."

Canon 7th. The office of elders and deacons, as it is now in use among us, is not perpetual; yet because changes are not incommodious, they shall be exhorted to continue in their offices as long as they can, and they shall not lay them down without having first obtained leave from their churches.

Canon 8th. Neither elders nor deacons shall claim any primacy or jurisdiction over one another, whether in nomination unto the people, or in precedency, or in order of voting, or in any matters depending upon their offices.

Canon 9th. Elders and deacons shall be deposed for those very crimes and causes, for which the Ministers of God's word are. . . .

Canon 10th. Elders and deacons being deposed shall not be restored in any other manner or form than is used in the readmission of deposed ministers."

These canons need no comment. Instead of a rotary system, like ours, approved in 1872, it is the very opposite; precluding and discouraging such a system; resembling the Scotch of 1642 in electing new members by the consistory itself, not by the people; exhorting elders to continue in office indefinitely; making discipline, and not ballots, the way of

ejecting bad elders; hinting plainly, that when they say "not perpetual," they mean a peculiarity of the French Church, expressed "as it is now in use among us"; and yet meaning palpably, by the word "perpetual," the opposite of what Messrs. Moore and Agnew try to make it mean in the Discipline of Scotland. Beyond a question, the Huguenots meant by the term, permanent in personal tenure of the office; and their difference from our own Book is but nominal, a word only, meaning by the monosyllable "not," what we mean by nearly two whole sections (6 and 7) of our chapter 13th in the Form of Government. Like the Church of Scotland, and our own, and nine-tenths of the Presbyterian name in every age and country, that illustrious Reform in France made the elder a spiritual officer, and not a mere representative, to be reduced to a mere delegate by spontaneous and frequent elections of the people. Their "growing church," like our growing churches, "in burgh and land," found it unspeakably better to add new material, as it came in, to the experienced nucleus already on the bench, than to roll it all out, when the people pleased, and tantalize the divested elder with an abstraction for his office, when its functions have been taken from him without cause, all the remainder of his life.

But our space is full. We have no room for a review of all the mistakes, ingeniously and zealously woven up, for the first time in all Presbyterian history, to antagonize the Westminster divines; whose great deliverance on the subject was positively an ecumenical Presbyterianism, answering to Waldensian, French, Dutch, English, Scotch, and Irish symbols and usages. "When any ruling elder is to be chosen where an eldership is constituted, let it be done by them with the consent and approbation of the people of the congregation; and *that not for a limited time.*"

The outcry of "liberty," "let us have liberty," and the menacing audacity which demanded a judicial decision, to suit a spreading leaven among the churches, along with an ultimate refusal of petitions, to allow the Presbyteries an overture on the subject, will hardly be taken yet by the Presbyterian Church as a conclusive argument for giving up this

landmark of our fathers. But they fill us with sorrow and inquietude. Liberty for the sake of liberty is licentiousness. And, with grave concern over one success, we must anxiously ask, what next? We had hoped, from the agitations which preceded the late reunion, and the unanimity with which "the standards pure and simple" were taken as a basis, to allay them all, that we would have these well-trying symbols conserved for one generation at least; or if altered, it would be done "decently and in order," as the constitution directs; and not be made first a dead letter in any part, and then a deaf ear in the dignity which deadened it, that would not hear the Presbyteries, when Presbyteries were begging at the moment, rightfully and respectfully, for the privilege of considering the question. The disappointment of this hope is a vexation, which cannot be silent, although it would not "speak evil of dignities;" and will not yield to any others, the theory and practice both of revering our General Assembly. But we wish that some George Gillespie would reappear among the young men who guide our beloved Church, and that, until he comes, our honored guides would read his works and try his "armor" on.