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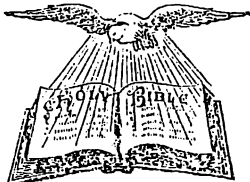
# CHURCH POLITY.

WRITTEN FOR



By REV. P. H. MELL, D.D., LL. D.

## PART I.



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# CHURCH POLITY.

By DR. P. H. MELL.

There are as many opinions on the subject of church polity as there are organizations that call themselves churches. No two, perhaps, agree even as to the definition of the word "church," however much they may resemble each other in external form and internal working. This, of course, is to be expected; for if any two admitted that they were exactly alike in all respects, there would be no excuse for their independent existence. Consequently, every one thinks it holds some vital truth, in form or substance, in theory or practice, which has been ignored or rejected by others; and of which, therefore, it is, in God's providence, the advocate and defender.

Each denomination of Christians is a leaven in the great public mass, exerting, to a greater or less extent, an influence openly or insidiously, by antagonism or by conciliation. They exert such influence not only on the outside public, but reciprocally on themselves also. True, when issues are joined, and lines of battle formed—when they are engaged in the war and conflict of opinions, and the battle is raging, the opposing warriors on each side are not open to conviction from each other. Their mission and their aim is to destroy or put to flight. It is no part of their plan to take captive those who can in no case be assimilated to themselves and join their ranks; but must always remain sullen enemies, waiting for an opportunity to escape, or to do them harm. But this cannot be the normal state of things. Christian denominations cannot remain perpetually in a state of acrimonious warfare. Living side by side in the same community; forming relationships with each other of affinity, of friendship, of business, of society; practicing towards each

other the amenities of life; and above all, governed by the spirit of Christian love, the individual members of conflicting denominations find it difficult to hold on to their personal prejudices, and impossible to continue a course of mutual repulsion. Before they are aware, they are found talking amicably and candidly about their points of agreement and disagreement; confiding to each other their experience of the dealings of God's grace with them, and thus obtaining mutually Christian fellowship; and meeting together at each other's houses of worship, prepared to "prove all things, and to hold fast to that which is good." Almost unconsciously they fall into the habit of obedience to Paul's exhortation, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." (Phil. iii: 16.

It would not be difficult, perhaps, to show that the Baptists have thus modified the opinions and the practices of the denominations in this country who "baptize" other than believers, and who use anything for the rite but immersion. Large numbers of parents in Pedobaptist denominations refuse to bring their infants to the "baptismal font;" and an increasing number of adult believers demand of reluctant pastors and rectors and preachers in charge, immersion in the name of the Trinity. Whether we can justly claim to have exerted any influence towards it or not, one of the great denominations has, within a few years, incorporated into its government the quality of popular influence, and adopted the principle, almost the very form of our conferences and district associations. The doctrines of soul-liberty; of the adequacy of God's

Word to be a complete rule of faith and practice; of the right of private judgment in matters of religion; of the separation of Church and State—doctrines which we for a long time held alone—are accepted and maintained by nearly all the denominations of this country.

It would not be surprising if we, also, have been reciprocally benefited by association with the intelligent and pious of other communions; for, while we think we have the principles and practices which have been maintained by the fathers away back to the Apostles, we may possibly have needed to be modified in some of the inferences drawn from them; or in the tone, or the coloring, or the emphasis which we attached to them.

However this may be, whether other denominations have thus modified us for good or not, we are constantly in danger of receiving damage from this insidious influence. Those among us that are not thoroughly interposed in regard to our system, are in danger of falling into modes of thought, and into the use of words and phrases, that are alien to us. These words and dialects, employed unsuspectingly in colloquial speech, in process of time, creep into our written and printed language, and before we are aware, become settled and fixed as technical and official. No religious paper, published anywhere by our denomination, can be taken up that does not contain an example illustrative of the proposition that our denomination is undergoing insidiously modification by the adoption and use of alien words, that express not our opinions of the matters referred to, but those of the denominations with which we are on those points in antagonism. It has seemed to the present writer that the time has come, respectfully, to call the attention of our people to these things.

Much of the difference of speculative opinion among our brethren originates also in the fact that some of them have adopted not only the phraseology, but the logical premises of other denominations. Besides, a violation of the principles of our polity lies at the foundation of nearly all the serious church troubles. A misapprehension or a misuse of the doctrines of sovereignty or independency; of the pastor's jurisdiction, his prerogative or his

responsibility—of his relations to the church, to its conference, or to its individual members; ignorance or misapplication of any great principle applicable to church government—has rent many a church, and brought scandal and reproach on the cause of Christ.

I know of no better way to point out these errors and evils, and apply a corrective to them, than by setting up the whole system of church polity as understood by the Baptists, and discussing each particular detail as it comes up as one of the parts of that system. In that way, by comparison, the coherency or incoherency, the consistency or inconsistency, will stamp each part as germane or alien. In all this, I cannot promise myself that all my brethren will agree with me; for if either they or I have been inoculated by the opinions or phraseology of other denominations, nothing will be more natural than dissent.

As a general thing, it is not agreeable to readers for a long series of articles to appear in a paper on the same topic from the same writer. The theme must be a very interesting one, or the writer must acquit himself with more than ordinary ability to escape disgust and reproach. I consent to run this risk, because I think a discussion of the sort is greatly needed, and because numbers of brethren solicit me to write on the subject; but I hold myself in readiness to discontinue these communications, at any stage of the discussion, whenever I become satisfied that readers, in weariness and disgust, skip over them. There is this saving clause, though: That, while the general subject is "Church Polity," every article will probably discuss a distinct topic of its own; and they need not be stale and uninviting because of a want of variety.

#### CHURCH POLITY—THE GOSPEL CHURCH—ITS FORM.

In the original Greek, the word *ekklesia* stands for that which, in all the English versions of the Bible, is represented by the word "church." The effect is, that *ekklesia* has never been, for us, authoritatively translated; for "church" is not even an English word. It is a barbarous term, corrupted from the Greek *kuriakon*, the house, or temple, of the Lord. This was first contracted into *kyrke*, and then corrupted into *church*. The Scotch

people retain the former term, with the orthography, *kirk*. What, then, is *ekklesia*? According to all our versions, it is *the house of the Lord*. Taken literally, then, according to derivation, the primary meaning of "church" is, *the house of worship*. Taken metaphorically, the definition confuses the candid inquirer, and furnishes, by its vagueness, occasions and pretexts for all the unscriptural hierarchies. Strange to say, that even in the version issued by the American Bible Union—a society organized for the professed and express purpose of translating for us the whole of God's word—we are informed that an *ekklesia* is a *kuriakon*, or "church!"

But barbarous and insignificant as the term is, it has become thoroughly entrenched in the English language, and it is impossible now to dislodge it, if we were disposed to. This is much to be regretted; for, while the effect of its dislodgment might be, in a sense, to *unchurch* the whole professed Christian world, more than compensation would be received in the fact that then we could clearly see who alone are entitled to claim *ecclesiastical* relations.

We are compelled, therefore, to use the word "church." But it in no sense defines or throws light upon *ekklesia*; for the latter term is the more perspicuous of the two. It, indeed, is more competent to give us the information we ask; for, besides being a native and legitimate, and not a foreign and bastard word, it is the term employed by inspiration. What, then, is the meaning of the word "church?" It means an *ekklesia*. What is the meaning of the word *ekklesia*? It means an *assembly*, or congregation. Everywhere in the New Testament it is used with this signification. If the word had been translated, it would never have been possible for the intelligent and the candid, who searched the Scriptures, to have accepted the idea of "a universal church catholic," or a "church of state, or nation." An assembly made up of all the professors of religion in the world, or in a nation, is an impossibility on earth, and the idea of it would have been rejected at once. There can be no *ekklesia* without the idea, the possibility and the necessity of meeting together at one place.

While *assembly* is the proper translation of the word, whenever found in the New Testament, *ekklesia* is employed in two senses to represent God's people; for the Holy Spirit looks upon and refers to them, now, as they are organized in local societies on earth, and, now, as they are assembled together in Heaven.

1. The following quotations prove that the idea of a church universal in Heaven is scriptural: "Gave him to be head over all things to the church." Eph. i: 22. "Upon this rock I will build my church." Mat. xvi: 18. "Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end." Eph. iii: 21. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Eph. iii: 10. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Eph. v: 23, etc. "But ye have come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven." Heb. xii: 22. This *ekklesia* has no organization or location on earth. Its place of assembling is Heaven, and the constituents of it are all the redeemed in Christ. From the time of Abel, the first one summoned, through all the ages, one by one they have been wending their way to the place of assembling; and when the last one of God's elect shall have arrived, they will constitute in fact what they have always been in God's conception and purpose, the general assembly and church of the firstborn in heaven. But this is not the church that constitutes the subject of the present discussion. Our business is with the organized church on earth.

2. Confining our inquiry to the scriptural idea of the church on earth, does *ekklesia* ever, in the singular number, indicate an organization over the whole world, or over nations, states or provinces? I answer, No. Whenever the inspired writers spoke of the organized people of God over a nation, state or large district, the term *ekklesia* is always used in the plural, as *e. g.*, "the churches throughout all Judea, and Galatia, and Sa-

maria." Ac. ix: 31. "The churches of Galatia." I Cor., xvi: 1. "The churches of Asia." I Cor., xvi: 19. "The churches of Macedonia." II Cor., viii: 1. Whenever the term is used in the singular, it is always to express the idea of a local organization, meeting together at one place; as, *e. g.*, "The church which was in Jerusalem." Ac. xi: 22. They "ordained them elders in every church." Ac. xiv: 23. "The church of the Laodiceans." Col. iv: 16. "The church that is at Babylon." I Pet., v: 13. When that at Jerusalem was the only church on earth, it was said properly, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Ac. ii: 47. "Saul made havoc of the church." Ac. viii: 3. And Paul said, "I persecuted the church of God." I Cor. xv: 9. It was proper to speak of it definitely as *the* church, since it was the only organized body of the kind on earth. But when those who, by persecution, were "scattered abroad through the regions of Judea and Samaria," Ac. viii: 1, preached the gospel, and, by God's blessing, formed other similar bodies, then it became natural and proper to say, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria." Ac. ix: 31.

One quality, then, connected with a New Testament church is, that it is a local organization, whose members can all meet together in one assembly, and are in the habit of doing so.

REMARK.—The above assertion is a truism among Baptists. Yet it is painful to know how often the principle is violated by the language used by even our intelligent brethren. The following expressions conform to the mode of speech of those whose idea of the *ekklesia* is at variance with ours: "The Baptist Church in America," or "the Baptist Church in Georgia," such a one "joined the Baptist Church," at such an age—when a particular Church is not mentioned; "our Church," when the one who uses the word is not a member of the organization to which he refers. When a Baptist editor in one city speaks of "our Church" in another; or a member, say of the Church at Athens, writes in the paper about the pastor of "our Church" at Penfield, their language can be interpreted to mean that the Baptist denomination is an organ-

ized body, of which the Churches at Athens and Penfield are component parts.

This topic will be resumed in next article.  
CHURCH UNIVERSAL VISIBLE ON EARTH—  
KINGDOM OF GOD.

In the close of the last article it was assumed that what is called the Baptist denomination is in no respect an organization of which the churches at Athens and Penfield could constitute component parts. Is this the true Scriptural doctrine? Some valued brethren answer in the negative; and maintain that the Scriptures speak of a church universal on earth—that it is a visible body, and is composed of the aggregate of local churches—that the Baptist denomination, the church visible universal, and the "Kingdom of God," of which Christ spoke to Nicodemus, are one and the same thing. Years ago I furnished for the press an article on this subject, which it is convenient for me to quote from copiously; and I do not hesitate to do so. Indeed, if I find sufficient encouragement, I desire in my present undertaking to put on record, in one view, the results of my life's study, experience and observation on the subject of Church Polity. Is it true, then, that the Baptist denomination—*i. e.*, the aggregate of local churches—and the church universal are synonymous terms? The following difficulties are in the way of answering in the affirmative:

1. This would be to include in "the general Assembly and church of the first born which are written in Heaven," some who have never been converted, and who will finally perish. Every one will grant that many, if not all, the Baptist churches, may contain persons who will live in hypocrisy or self-deceit, and die in impotence and go to perdition.

2. This would be to exclude from "the General Assembly and church of the first born" many who have been converted and saved in Heaven. On this principle, all the Old Testament worthies would be excluded from the universal church; though we are told that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, shall sit down in the Kingdom of Heaven. These and multitudes of others now in glory died before the formation of the first local church in Jerusalem. On this principle the thief on the cross will be excluded, though the Saviour said to him "This day shalt thou

be with me in paradise;" and even John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, would be shut out; since he never was baptized, and never was a member of a Baptist church.

If Christ, was made head over all things only to the aggregate of local churches, then He does not and never did bear that relation to Abraham, and a vast multitude of others, though they were redeemed by His precious blood.

3. This would be to use the term "church" in the sense in which we deny it to the Romish hierarchy, and other organizations of vast territorial extent. The Baptist denomination, since the dispersion of the disciples at Jerusalem, never did and never will meet together in one assembly on earth. If, then, the Baptist denomination in the world, which cannot meet together in one assembly, can be called a church, how can we deny to the Methodist Episcopal organization, or the Presbyterian organization, the name of a church, on the plea that they cannot thus meet together? The Baptist (and, we think, the scriptural) local organization is called a church, because it constitutes an assembly capable of meeting together in one place. Upon what principles, then, can we call the Baptist denomination a church, when it is composed of distinct churches, that by the very theory of their organization must remain distinct, and which will lose their distinctive characteristics, and become annihilated, when they are merged into one general organization? If they are merged together in fact, they are annihilated in fact; if the merging is a mere mental conception, then the mental conception is an annihilation of the true scriptural conception. According to the signification of the word *ekklesia*, it is as easy to conceive of the church or assembly of all the Romanists in the world, as of the church or assembly of all the Baptist churches in the world. Nay, easier; since in their case nothing prevents but the physical impossibility, while, in the case of the Baptist churches, to this physical impossibility are added the thousands and thousands of barriers afforded by the organization of each. An assembly composed of individuals, however impossible, may be conceived; but what imagination can picture an assembly whose components are local churches? But

4. If it is correct in any sense to call the aggregate of Baptist churches a church, where and what is the general organization? A number of machines placed in contact side by side do not become one vast machine: so the array of thousands and thousands of Baptist churches do not, in fact or mental conception, constitute one general church. They still remain what they were before—the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are organizations, but where is THE organization *par excellence*? Where is the head of this church, either in the form of Pope, or Bishop, or Pastor? It is nothing to the purpose to refer us to Christ in Heaven as the head. A "visible" organization on earth demands a "visible" head on earth also. Finally, where is the place of meeting on earth, and what are the functions of this visible church universal? Let the constituents of the church universal be regenerated persons, the place of meeting Heaven, and the period when they shall completely assemble, the time when all Christ's redeemed people shall be gathered together in one, and we can perceive the propriety of the terms applied to it—"the General Assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in Heaven." Then can we see the pertinence and truth of the apostle's declaration, when he says, "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it: that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle; or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. v: 25-27. Christ's Church universal is composed exclusively of regenerated persons, from all Christian organizations, and from no organizations, who have no external bond of union, and who will never all meet together until they constitute the General Assembly above.

An able and estimable brother in another State puts forth an ingenious theory in his attempt to explain that much controverted passage, Jno. iii: 5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." In his opinion, "born of water" means baptized; and "Kingdom of God" the aggregate of Christ's local churches. He calls attention specially to the word "see" in verse 3d, and the words "enter into" in verse 5th. In the former Christ says to Nicodemus, "except a man be born again, he can-

not see (*ἰδεῖν*) the Kingdom of God." Except a man be made a new creature by the regenerating grace of the Spirit he cannot see—*i. e.* know, understand and appreciate things spiritual—*i. e.* things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Except one is born of water also—*i. e.* baptized in addition to the birth by the Spirit, he cannot enter into (*εἰσελθεῖν*) the Kingdom of God—*i. e.* be received into Christ's visible Church. According to the theory, the Saviour instructed Nicodemus (1) as to the spiritual change every one must receive before he can know anything of the spiritual kingdom; and (2) what he must do, or submit to, besides, in order to enter into it. To me it seems strange that this theory seems plausible to any one as able and as sound in the faith as the author of it. Do not the following considerations make it untenable:

1. The same meaning that is attached to the expression, "Kingdom of God," in the third verse must be retained in verse fifth, for Christ is speaking of the same thing in each case. And no doubt the attentive and logical reader has already noted how this principle is violated in my statement of the theory. We have no right to give the phrase a spiritual signification in one verse and a literal in the other—to make it now a spiritual idea and experience and then a visible organization and entity.

(a) Suppose, then, that "Kingdom of God" means in both places Christ's visible people—*i. e.* the aggregate of all His local churches. With this interpretation, in what respect is it true that a man must undergo a spiritual regeneration before he can see, or make the acquaintance of Christ's visible people—*i. e.* all His local churches? Cannot an unrenewed man see a local church assembled, or understand a theory of its organization, as well as one renewed? And what faculty has the latter which makes him better able than the former to realize in consciousness the impossible mental conception of a "church" composed of the aggregate of all local churches on earth? But granting the possibility, it is not apparent why one must be "born again" in order to see, *i. e.* to get the idea, and make the acquaintance of "the visible church."

(b) If the words "Kingdom of God" in

verse third is to be interpreted to mean Christ's spiritual reign, then the same words in verse fifth must have the same signification also. Whatever the new birth, by the Spirit, enables the person to see, that same thing the birth by the Spirit and by water must enable him to enter into. Now see the consequences. It is something pertaining to the spiritual life and relations that the one "born again" sees. Now, if "born of water" means baptized, then the ordinance has a power in itself to effect results in the spiritual realm that the Third Person in the Trinity is Himself not adequate to. The Holy Spirit can of His own power enable men to "see" the spiritual life and the spiritual relations, but He is powerless to help men to "enter into" the spiritual condition and relation, unless baptism steps forward to His assistance! This is ritualism, and not the teaching of Christ. Any interpretation of an obscure passage must be rejected which leads to such contradiction of all the explicit teachings of the Scriptures on the subject of baptism. That one can "enter into" a local church by baptism is a proposition we can understand, however repugnant the idea may be to the teachings of the New Testament, and to our own convictions; but how the ordinance can cause him to "enter into" the "Kingdom of God" without being an "*opus operatum*"—without possessing essentially within itself spiritual power, is beyond our comprehension. No one has a right to be baptized excepting one who has already "entered into" the Kingdom of God." In a subsequent stage of the discussion, it will be incumbent on me to prove this; and to show also that men do not "enter into" even "the local church" by baptism—again:

2. If "born of water" means baptized, then the ordinance symbolizes primarily the operations of the Spirit, and not the work of Christ. By regeneration the man is actually, in fact, "born of the Spirit; by ceremony, and in "figure" (I. Peter iii: 21) he is "born of water," for no well-informed Baptist will admit that the ordinance is in itself anything but a figure. The reality—that which the Spirit works—is symbolized by the figure, or else there is no significance in the conjunction of "water" and "Spirit;" and no propriety in applying the



word "born" to each. "Born," in fact, "born" in a "figure." But does baptism symbolize the work of the Spirit primarily? Pedobaptists, with one voice, answer yes; and they support their affirmation chiefly by reference to this disputed phrase, "born of water and of the Spirit." Just as unanimously Baptists answer in the negative. To us the Scriptures teach that baptism symbolizes a "death" and "burial," not a "birth," primarily, the work of Christ, and not the operations of the Spirit. We accept Paul's interpretation when he tells us, "we are buried with Him by baptism into death." But this topic will come up for consideration in detail further on in this discussion. Strange, that any of us should have believed that "born of water" refers to baptism!

There are but two senses in which the word church is used in the New Testament—the local assemblies on earth and the General Assembly in Heaven. The former are a mere temporary scaffolding by which the Great Architect "builds" (Mat. xvi: 18) the latter, His permanent "church" in Heaven. "Unto Him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end," (Eph. iii: 21,) long after all local churches shall cease to exist.

#### CHURCH POLITY—THE CHURCH—ITS MEMBERS—FIRST QUALIFICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP—CONVERSION AND THE EVIDENCE OF IT.

What are the qualifications for membership in a Gospel church?

*First*—Do individuals obtain such membership on the ground that they are citizens or subjects of the nation with which such church is connected? The New Testament knows nothing of the union of church and State. A local assembly, with all its members capable of meeting together at one place, and accustomed to do so, cannot occupy a territory commensurate with that of a nation; and cannot form a party, therefore, to such union.

*Second*—Do children inherit by natural birth the spiritual character or the spiritual rights of their parents, and thus obtain membership in local churches? Christ warned the Jews not to plume themselves on the fact that they had Abraham to their father, (Mat. iii: 9), and instructed Nicodemus that except a man

be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. (Jno. iii: 3.) If they that are in the flesh cannot please God—(Rom. viii: 8)—if all are by nature children of wrath, (Eph. ii: 3,) then there is no inheritance of holiness and of spiritual rights. No one then can scripturally claim membership in a local church on the ground that his parents are, or were, members of it. He must acquire in his own experience, through the operations of Divine grace, a spiritual regeneration—he must be born again—"born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," (Jno. i: 13,) before he can be prepared for admission into a Gospel church. The New Testament knows nothing of infant church membership.

Nor, *third*, are unconverted persons authorized by the Scriptures to join the church with the intention to use it as "a means of grace" by which to attain to salvation; for the Lord added to the church in Jerusalem only those (*σωζομένους*) already saved. (Acts ii: 47.)

1. The *first qualification*, then, for membership in one of Christ's churches, is the experience of regenerating, converting and justifying grace. That none but a believer is entitled to membership is argued.

1. Because Christ's commission to His apostles was first to make disciples and then teach them to observe all His commandments. (Mat. xxviii: 19, 20.) The Gospel requires all to be personally followers of Christ; and it is reasonable that none other than followers are eligible to membership with His organized and professed people. Simon, the sorcerer, surreptitiously obtained admittance to the company of disciples organized into a church at Samaria; but as soon as his true character was manifested, Peter said to him, "thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of the Lord." (Acts viii: 21.)

That none but believers are entitled to membership is argued again.

2. Because in their epistles to the different churches the apostles addressed the members, or spoke of them, in such terms as to imply that they were all admitted to be believers in Christ: "To all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." (Romans i: 7)—"unto the church of God

which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," (I Cor. i: 2; see also II Cor. i: 1)—"to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ep. i: 1); "unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thes. i: 1; see also II Thes. i: 1.)

2. The *second qualification* for membership in a Gospel church is such a declaration and manifestation of conversion and faith in Christ as to secure the Christian fellowship of those already members of such church.

There are two prominent ways by which it may be seen that men have been changed from nature to grace.

1st. We can know them by their fruits. By contrasting their present lives with those they led before conversion it can appear that old things have passed away and that all things have become new. By comparing their lives with the Gospel standard and requirement, we can take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. But these tests require time and continued observation, while the precepts and examples of the New Testament demand that a believer should come out on the Lord's side as soon as he experiences regenerating, converting and justifying grace. One gives unscriptural and pernicious advice who would persuade a young convert to wait until he can demonstrate whether or not he is truly converted; and a church has no right to delay the approach of such until, by lapse of time, opportunity may be afforded for observation, and thus for the formation of an opinion on the question of his conversion.

2d. Another way just as reliable, by which the young convert can obtain Christian fellowship is profession by word. From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself; (I Jno. v: 10) and that witness consists not only in the testimony of the Spirit but in the heart experiences which he realized as he was passing from darkness into God's marvelous light. A simple recital of these exercises will carry conviction to the minds of Christians who hear; for as face answereth to face in the glass so does the heart of one renewed man

to that of another. By telling his Christian experience, the renewed man can not only profess to a consciousness of the hope in him, but also give a reason for it with meekness and fear (I Peter iii: 15). Nor is this any hardship to him; for nothing is more natural than for him to say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."

The next article will show the propriety of requiring a recital of the Christian experience.

#### CHURCH POLITY—CONVERTED MEMBERSHIP CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

In asking for evidence of a change of heart by requiring a statement of Christian experience, our churches are not destitute of scriptural precedent. Cornelius gave to Peter and others an extended account of the exercises of his mind; (Acts x: 30, etc.) and when the Ethiopian enquired whether it would be admissible for him to be baptized, Phillip said to him, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He elicited from him that brief but comprehensive heart declaration, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts viii: 32.) Why may it not have been a universal custom in apostolic times to require a statement of experience anterior to baptism and church membership?

1. It is answered perhaps that on occasions on which large numbers were baptized, there was not time to listen to Christian experiences. Take for example the day of pentecost. How could three thousand converts have related Christian experiences when it is already argued that there was not time simply to have administered to them all the ordinance of baptism according to the Baptist method? To this I answer:

1. The narrative does not say that three thousand were baptized on the day of pentecost. "Then *they that gladly received His Word* were baptized." It does not say how many—'and the same day *there were added* unto them 'three thousand souls.' (Acts ii: 41.) On that day, the first Gospel church was organized. They that gladly received the Word were baptized, and together with others, to the number of three thousand, who had been previously baptized by John and the disciples, were or-

ganized into the church at Jerusalem. This is given as in the opinion of the writer the true interpretation of the passage: and not as an expedient to escape embarrassment from the difficulty of immersing so large a number. Time is consumed chiefly not in the act of baptism, but in pronouncing the formula, "I baptize thee into the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." No more time is needed to immerse a subject than to sprinkle or pour water upon him decently and in order.

2. When in apostolic times circumstances permitted, it may have been customary to listen to a detailed experience like that given by Cornelius: When time pressed and circumstances did not admit of delay, as when parties like the Eunuch were on a journey, then it may have sufficed to hear brief and comprehensive statements. Many a visiting Baptist minister in these times, officiating for the absent pastor, obtains from the candidate while leading him down into the water, a confession of faith in Christ which secures his Christian fellowship, and justifies him in proceeding to co-operate with him in making that profession public by baptism. On the day of pentecost, the parties baptized gave satisfactory evidence that they had "gladly, received the Word;" one way of giving this was by language. If they had not time to do it in detailed and extended narrative, it might have been furnished in summary statement. Let this be as it may, it is the right and duty of the church to receive into its membership only those that give evidence of a change of heart; and it only follows scriptural precedent when it asks applicants to give a reason of the hope in them, by telling the dealings of the Lord with them in their experience.

2. It is objected again that it is subjecting the young and the timid to too severe an ordeal to require them to come before a large audience like a church, and that if an experience must be told, it would be much better to give it to the pastor or to a committee who could report it to the church. The burden imposed upon a timid female, for instance, becomes the more unreasonable, says the objector, because of the fact that it is so unnecessary. To this I answer:

1. It is a heavy cross to tell an experience before a multitude; and so it is also to be baptized in the same presence. But a Christian's life is one of cross-bearing. "Deny thyself, and take thy Cross, is the Redeemer's great command." It is no argument, therefore, against anything that it would be to the Christian a Cross. But many a timid female, who has come forward tremblingly to relate her experience, has demonstrated the truth of the Saviour's declaration, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

2. God frequently makes the artless statement of a Christian experience the most powerful and effective preaching. Christian hearts are warmed, and their eyes melted to tears; careless sinners are awakened and convicted, as a little timid child perhaps gives her unsophisticated story of the methods and dealings of God's grace. For this purpose, in part, God gives the injunction, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1. Peter iii: 15); and the poet properly expresses the feeling and intention of every new convert when He makes him say, "Then will I tell to sinners 'round what a dear Saviour I have found."

3. The Baptists with their principles could not refer this matter to the pastor or to a committee; and it is surprising that other denominations, who believe in and endeavor to maintain the principle of a converted church membership, do not see that in requiring a statement of Christian experience before the whole church we are governed by the same principles that control them. They believe that none but regenerated persons are entitled to membership; so do we. They hold that those who apply must give in some way satisfactory evidence that they have thus been changed: so do we. They require that the applicant shall thus satisfy all of their number whose prerogative it is to decide the question of admission: we do no more. With them, the question is decided by the preacher in charge alone, or in connection with a committee; or by a select few, called a session, composed of pastor and ruling elders: with us it is decided by the suffrage of the whole church. They require the candidate to appear before, and talk with

all those whose prerogative it is to decide the question : we do no more; for it is the duty of every member to give suffrage for or against the reception of the applicant. Like all other denominations, who believe in a converted church membership, we require every applicant, by giving the reason of the hope in him, to endeavor to gain the fellowship of all those who have to vote on the question of his admission. We can do no less, then, than to require a statement of a Christian experience before the whole church.

4. Finally, it is objected that it is dangerous to the applicant for a church to receive and pass upon experiences. The one accepted may have been deceived; and for an intelligent church by his reception to endorse his experience will be to strengthen him in delusion. To this it is replied, that the danger spoken of cannot be escaped, even if experience is omitted, so long as the religious organization professes to receive only those who, on any grounds, are accepted as converted people. We yield our Christian fellowship to those who tell us a satisfactory Christian experience: other denominations may yield theirs on different grounds. It is the manifestation of fellowship that does the damage, if any, and not the grounds on which that fellowship is based.

#### CHURCH POLITY—PROFESSION OF RELIGION, BY BAPTISM.

3. The *third qualification* for membership in a Gospel church is a public profession of religion, and here a mistake needs to be corrected. Men do not "profess religion" by "joining a church," but by submitting to baptism. Paul says to the Galatians (iii : 27): "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." As His servants they publicly professed by the ordinance to "put on" His livery; as His soldiers in the same way to "put on" His uniform; and thus intentionally signalized themselves in those relations.

Baptism is in no respect an *opus operatum*; it effects nothing towards procuring salvation. It does not regenerate the soul; nor does it exert any efficiency towards completing the process, or securing the fact, of the remission of sins. It furnishes an opportunity and a way of professing religion; and this is all the purpose it subserves to the believer. "The

answer of a good conscience toward God," (I Peter iii : 21), and all the other blessings resulting, are consequences of the act of obedience in using the ordinance as God's appointed method of publicly professing His name. It is a mere symbol designed as a "figure" (I Peter iii : 21), to represent salvation—in atonement and "remission of sins" (Acts ii : 38.) Indeed, it is God's intention, when He appoints baptism as the method of "professing religion," to make the candidate and administrator exhibit to the eyes of the people the same great truths that the preacher addresses to their ears, viz: The atonement of Christ and the believer's interest in it: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi : 4). "Buried with him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Col. ii : 12). Christ, the Saviour, and the believer whose sins have been forgiven, are the prominent figures represented in the baptismal tableau, just as Christ is the main theme in oral preaching; but the Gospel in symbol, as well as the Gospel in vocal utterance, exhibits the relations of the Father and the Holy Spirit also towards salvation.

The ordinance teaches to the eye that Jesus died for our sins; that he was buried; that He rose again for our justification; that the believer is crucified with Christ and dead and buried to the law and to the world; and that he is risen again to walk in newness of life. While Christ's work and the believer's interest in it are thus prominently exhibited, it suggests forcibly also what the formula positively asserts, that the Father and the Holy Spirit take efficient and equal parts with the Son in the work of salvation. No one then has a right to take a place in the symbolical representation excepting one who has a good hope through grace that the Spirit has regenerated him and brought him to Jesus; that the Father has revealed His Son in him (Gal. i : 16) and pardoned and justified him; and that Jesus had given him power to become a son of God. (Jno. i : 12).

Baptism, therefore, is wisely appointed as a

means to the believer of making a public profession because,

1. It exhibits to the eyes of the people the profession of the believer's conversion with all the efficient causes of it, and the intended and promised consequences of it. The method of his salvation through the interposition of the Divine Persons, with all that preceded it in the divine purpose, and all that would follow it in his sanctification and consecration are exhibited silently but impressively by the symbol.

2. It is suitable, again, because the formula, pronounced by the administrator, explains to the ears of the people that the believer is publicly professing his allegiance to the Trinity. "I baptize thee *into* (εἰς) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mat. xxviii : 19) does not mean that the administrator has divine authority for acting as he does, but that the candidate is baptized into a state of professed subjection to the Triune God.

3. Finally, it is suitable because immersion has a tendency to collect crowds to witness the profession; for (1) the bodies or streams of water suitable that nature provides, are usually out of doors, and, therefore, public and in that respect, accessible; and (2) the ordinance administered in the open air or in a house, has a wonderful fascination to attract people in crowds. The tendency therefore is to give the profession publicity and notoriety.

But one may be baptized and still not be a member of a church. Philip baptized the eunuch while traveling to Ethiopia; but there was no church in that "desert" (Acts viii : 26) region that could have received him into membership. The same thing was true in reference to the first converts baptized by the Apostles in places at which no churches had yet been organized. Baptism did not admit them into any church; it only furnished them the means of making public profession of religion.

#### CHURCH POLITY—FINAL QUALIFICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP—JOINING THE CHURCH.

4. *The fourth and final qualification for membership is the vote of the church receiving a baptized believer on his personal application. No one becomes a member without his knowledge and consent; nor can any*

power thrust him into the unwilling company of Christ's organized people. The union is brought about intelligently, and voluntarily, and with the hearty concurrence of both parties. When the baptized believer applies, he is received into membership, if at all, by the vote of the church; and here again a mistake needs to be corrected: Baptism is not the door of the church; and persons are not "baptized into its fellowship." A church not only admits members but it dismisses them also, in good standing, or with fellowship withdrawn. Now, that which is "the door" of ingress must be "the door" of egress also. If baptism serves that purpose for admission, what is the expedient for dismissal? Baptism, also? The same door that opened cordially to receive one, may be opened again kindly and fraternally to dismiss him in good standing; or painfully and reluctantly to thrust him out because he has lost the fellowship. If it be necessary to retain the use of the metaphor, "door of the church," then it ought to be understood that *the vote of the church* is that door. By such vote the applicant becomes a member, and his connection is dissolved in the same way; for thus the church authorizes a letter of dismission in good standing, or withdraws fellowship from one hopelessly in disorder.

Nothing is more common than for our own writers to inform us that converts were "baptized into the fellowship of the church." This is another case where the language of those who differ with us has crept into our literature; and an idea foreign and antagonistic to our system seems to be advocated by those claiming to be exponents of our polity. Baptism no more produces fellowship than it "regenerates" or procures "the remission of sins." Fellowship is secured by a statement of Christian experience, not by baptism; and the applicant is admitted by a vote of the church, not "received by baptism," as our official publications sometimes appear to assert.

But it may be said that the practice of Baptist churches seems to teach a doctrine different from that I give above. The candidate for baptism comes forward on invitation before the pastor and the church in conference, and the latter seems to decide on

both his baptism and his church-membership by one and the same vote.

It is not a sufficient reply to this, that the church does not vote on the baptism but only on the reception of the applicant. True, the question is presented in the following terms: "All in favor of receiving this gentleman (or lady) into the fellowship of the church *after baptism*, will signify it," etc., and the direct vote if affirmative is, in terms, only a pledge in advance to give him membership after baptism. But could not the church as well as the pastor stop proceedings on the ground that Christian fellowship has not been gained? If not, why confuse the subject by seeming to require in advance a concurrence of church and pastor in the opinion that the applicant is entitled to baptism? If the church has no responsibility and suffrage on the question, why is it not the usage that none should relate a Christian experience before a church, and apply for membership, excepting those already baptized? Does the right to decide on the baptism of a candidate belong to the pastor, or to the church, or to both? Just here discrimination is greatly needed; for it is in this connection that much of the disagreement among our people is to be found. In my next I shall endeavor to make these discriminations, and answer the above questions. The article will be a *very long one* because I wish to present the whole matter in one view. All earnest readers are, in advance, respectfully asked to give it attentive and thoughtful perusal.

CHURCH POLITY. WHERE IS LODGED THE  
AUTHORITY TO DECIDE UPON THE BAPTISM  
OF A CANDIDATE.

The discussion in the last article brought us to this question, "Does the right to decide on the baptism of a candidate belong to the pastor, or to the church, or to both?" An adequate answer to this involves the necessity of publishing a very long article. It is to be hoped though that the reader will patiently peruse it notwithstanding, for just in this connection originate nearly all the differences of opinion among well-informed Baptists. The writer firmly believes that if our people could unite on the grounds of the answer to the above

question, their differences would vanish; and they would all see eye to eye. But to attain this end discriminations in the light of the gospel must be patiently and candidly made and considered. The discriminations following are respectfully offered in solution of the question:

1. Before the existence of the first church in Jerusalem, the whole power, prerogative and duty were in the hands of the ministers. Since it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, and no churches could be organized until human beings thus saved could be furnished as materials, it was necessary that the preachers, both in the order of nature and of time, should precede the churches. It was necessary that Divine power should raise extraordinary agents for starting the process, and consummating the work in the formation of churches. Thus was raised up John the Baptist; and thus the Master appointed the Apostles and other contemporary ministers. These belonged to no church, and were responsible to none; for no such body as yet existed. To these Christ gave the commission authorizing them to preach the gospel and to baptize; and promising to be with them always. To the Apostles, He gave the promise besides of plenary inspiration to guide them in all the doctrines they might announce, and in all the institutions they might organize. He assured them that they should be so thoroughly guided by divine inspiration that whatsoever they might bind on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they might loose on earth should be loosed in heaven. Mat. xvi: 19, and xviii: 18. Apostolic example therefore is as binding upon us as scriptural precept.

Before the organization of the first church, the question of the baptism of a candidate was decided exclusively by the ministers.

2. After the organization of the first church at Jerusalem, how did the original ministers act in a territory outside of its bounds, or in regions where no churches existed? How did they interpret the commission on the subject of baptism? Only two examples furnish us definite information—viz, that of the Ethiopian and that of Cornelius.

(a.) In the case of the Eunuch, Philip wa

alone. An angel had said to him, "Arise and go toward the south;" and when the Ethiopian approached, the Spirit said to him, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Acts viii: 29. This case then is exactly under divine guidance; and we may not hesitate to take it as an infallible example. When the Eunuch expressed a desire to put on Christ in baptism, Philip did not hesitate or feel embarrassed because he was alone. The only thing he required was that the candidate should give evidence that he believed with all his heart. He hinted nothing about the absence of a church conference, or about want of jurisdiction or prerogative on his own part. As soon as the Ethiopian professed, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," then and there he baptized him—in the presence of his traveling retinue. Here is a case of a minister acting by divine guidance, on his own responsibility, without consulting the church at Jerusalem though he was a member of it. He was now far away from the territory of his church, and consequently it was physically impossible for him to consult it.

In like manner, a missionary in a heathen land may not hesitate to pass upon the question of baptism without consultation; and administer the ordinance to the first company of those who are converted under his ministry. He need not send to his church at home a written statement of experience of every one of those applying for baptism, and then wait until that body can vote ordering or forbidding. The first question that arises he can decide himself without consultation with anybody. Whether he can do so in the case of any subsequent application for baptism we can better learn by reference to the only other scriptural example that can throw light on our present inquiry.

(b.) When Peter obeyed the summons to Cornelius, he went not alone. "Certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him." Acts x: 23. Like Philip, he was far away from the jurisdiction of the church of which he was a member; but unlike him, he was not alone. When satisfied with the experience of Cornelius, did he immediately "command" him to be baptized? Not so. He first consulted the brethren that were with him. He addressed a question to them in these words, "Can any man

forbid (*κωλύσαι*) water, that these should not be baptized?" The term he employs seems to contain an admission that the brethren accompanying him had a right to a voice, if not of authority, at least of advice; and Peter seems to pledge himself that he would not proceed until he could gain unanimous acquiescence. If any one dissented, he would at least pause long enough to consider the objection, and attempt to satisfy it. This is as much force perhaps as ought to be given to the word "forbid" as in the mouth of any one of this company of unorganized brethren; for the inspired narrative proceeds to say: "And he *commanded* (*προσέταξε*) them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." verse 48. The decision of the question seems to have been made authoritatively by Peter.

Scripture example therefore seems to teach that when a minister with other brethren is away from the jurisdiction of any church, he may not proceed to baptize an applicant without consulting the brethren with him, and trying to gain their concurrence. They as well as he are interested in the transaction; and they as well as he are competent to pass upon the question of Christian fellowship, and as to the expediency or in expediency of the candidate's proceeding to consummate his design by making public profession of religion in baptism. But it would seem that even in this case the authority in the last resort to decide this question belongs to the minister—the man who will personally co-operate with the candidate in his profession of the religion of Christ.

Acting on the principle of the above scriptural example, Baptist chaplains in the army during the "war between the States," before deciding to baptize those soldiers professing conversion, gathered together as many Baptist Christians as they could, and sought their advice and concurrence.

It will not be amiss in this connection to remind the reader that the Eunuch, Cornelius and the converted soldiers, though having professed religion by baptism, were not by that admitted to any church. A vote of a body of the kind was necessary to complete the series of qualifications for membership. And this vote was given, if at all, on the occasion of the personal application of the candidates wh

furnished satisfactory evidence that they had been baptized; and gave such a statement of the dealings of God's grace with them as to secure Christian and church fellowship.

It seems evident from the discussion thus far that before the organization of the first local church, and in regions out of the reach of its influence and interposition, ministers were authorized to decide upon the question of the administration of baptism. But

3. When churches were organized, did the Master confer any jurisdiction and authority upon them in the premises? Did they have no voice in the question as to whether the professed convert should proceed to put on Christ in baptism? or, if they had any voice, was it one only of advice, like that which seems to have been exercised by the brethren with Peter at Cesarea? It is reasonable and scriptural to assume that the local church has in some sense jurisdiction over the subject of baptism within its bounds: for

(a). God has made it "the pillar and ground of the truth." I. Tim. iii: 15. It is God's great institution whose design is to maintain and support the truth, and proclaim and propagate it throughout the world. It has within itself and under its control all the earthly agencies which are efficient for the maintenance and propagation of the truth. The ministers are its members. By the church they are called to ordination; are invited to the pastorate; and, by divine appointment, are supported while they are engaged in the work of the ministry. And while God and not the church gives the authority to preach, the minister, by divine appointment, is responsible to the church of which he is a member; and, if he preaches false doctrine, it is its right and duty to hold him to account for it; and, if he persists, to exclude him from fellowship. Besides, it is the right and duty of all the members, whether minister or not to tell all they know about Christ—to exercise every influence by precept and example to bring sinners to Christ. If the church has a prerogative and duty in seeking the salvation of the sinner, it is reasonable to suppose that it is vested with the authority to pass upon the evidence of such salvation; and to authorize or forbid the profession of religion in the

prescribed form. And it would be extraordinary if a minister, her member responsible to her, should be vested with a prerogative which she cannot for cause bring under review.

(b). Again, those who properly make profession of religion by baptism are those who are competent to apply for membership in a church; and all such should 'by vote be received into the organized company of Christ's people. It would be anomalous and embarrassing for those baptized to be turned loose without church relations. But one thus baptized may fail to secure the fellowship of the church. Reason therefore would say that that body must have the power to authorize or forbid the baptism.

(c). In strong corroboration of this argument is the fact that the Holy Spirit used the intervention of the church at Antioch, in sending Barnabas and Saul on their tour of preaching, Ac. xiii: 2; and that these distinguished ministers on their return reported to the church the incidents and results of their mission, Ac. xiv: 27. See also a similar report in the case of Cornelius rendered by Peter to his church at Jerusalem. Ac. xi.

The very fact that the local church is made "the pillar and ground of the truth" shows that all of Christ's churches, directly or indirectly, are vested with power and jurisdiction over all gospel processes and results within the bounds of their territory. The conclusion is irresistible to me that the local church can authorize or forbid the administration of baptism within its bounds. But if the church has this prerogative,

4. What is the effect upon the minister? Has he lost now the authority he used to have? As simple evangelist, before churches were formed, or far away from church territory, he had a certain power over the subject of baptism. It was his prerogative to decide whether the candidate should be baptized or not. Since the formation of churches and their multiplication everywhere; so that he cannot escape from their bounds, has all voice on the subject been taken from him? Is he a mere machine or automaton, to baptize only and always when the church instructs him to do so? By no means. He



still vested with the authority and duty to decide on the propriety of the baptism of an applicant; for

(a.) To him was the commission to baptize first given; and there is no evidence from the New Testament that any others than ordained ministers were authorized to administer the rite. To him was given in the beginning the right and duty of deciding the question; and there is no evidence that that prerogative was ever taken from him.

(b.) Again, on every rational principle it must be true that God clothes with authority, and holds to a strict account for the exercise of it, that servant of His whose prerogative alone it is to take essential part with the convert in his public profession of religion by baptism. The voluntary agent who is responsible for the administration of baptism must have the right in himself to decline to administer the ordinance unless the candidate had secured his Christian fellowship. It cannot be therefore that the minister, whether evangelist or pastor, has all power over the subject taken from him because he is living within the bounds of a church. It must be in his power to decide, as responsible only to the Master, whether he will aid the candidate in so important a step as a public profession of religion. This brings us then to what appears to be

#### THE TRUE DOCTRINE.

5. The church and the administrator, be he pastor or simply ordained minister, have concurrent jurisdiction. Either can prevent the public profession; and it requires the concurrent voices of both to authorize the administration of the rite. The minister's prerogative is not taken from him; he is only restricted in the exercise of it. He no longer has sole jurisdiction over the question. Philip and Peter would not have had the same prerogative and the same degree of authority and power, if they had confronted their candidates within the territory, or in the presence of the conferences of churches. If there had been a church at Cesarea, Peter would have advised the Centurion to state his Christian experience in the presence of it; and if he had acted as the administrator of the ordinance, he would have put the question, not in the form calculated to elicit advice, but in that adapted to secure

an authoritative vote giving or withholding its assent to the baptism. The words of the question put by him would not have been those addressed to unorganized brethren, "Can any man forbid water;" but such as would have been apposite to an organized body, clothed with authority, "All in favor of encouraging this candidate to proceed to publicly profess religion, indicate it"—by the voices or the hands.

Baptist churches and pastors have always acted on this principle. They have listened together to the statement of Christian experience. If the pastor is satisfied he puts the question to the church; if not satisfied, he withholds the question, and it is decided against the applicant. The same result is attained, however satisfied the pastor may be should the church give a virtual vote in the negative.

QUESTION: But it may be asked, is not this conclusion inconsistent with the proposition that the church appears upon the scene only in the last act, when by its vote it completes the qualifications for church-membership? I answer, yes; inconsistent with such proposition; but such proposition should never have been made nor implied. Certainly, it has not been my intention to authorize or suggest such conclusion. In a sense, the church is always on the scene. True, in its aggregate capacity, as an organized body in conference, it presents itself in the presence of the candidate only when by its implied vote it authorizes his baptism, and by its expressed vote it pledges itself to receive him into membership after such baptism—but, by its influence; by the processes and agencies which it puts in operation and sustains; by the precepts and example of its individual members; it is always informally and virtually present with sinners; bringing the gospel to bear upon their hearts; inviting and persuading them to accept Christ; sympathizing with them in their distress under conviction for sin; and rejoicing with them when, thus aided by it to find the cross, they discover how God can be just whilst He justifies their souls as they believe in Jesus. By its vote receiving the baptized candidate it completes not only his qualifications for membership but the long series of its own co-operating processes as well.

We conclude then that in a region where a church is accessible, no minister has a right to baptize on his own responsibility. No baptism in such circumstances is scriptural, unless the candidate applies for it to the administrator and the church conjointly, and secures their concurrent assent to aid him in thus professing Christ. But baptism does not admit into the church any more than conversion does. Nothing but the vote of the church constitutes its door of admission.

REMARK. The discriminations in this discussion throw some light on the questions of what is called "Alien Immersions," and what is called "The Old Landmark."

1. If to render a baptism, within reach of a church, scriptural and valid, the candidate must appear before church and administrator both and gain their concurrence, it is easy to see that what is called "Alien Immersion" is no "baptism" at all.

2. But in the case of preaching, the minister needs not the presence of the conference of the church, nor even of Christians organized or unorganized. Be he pastor or evangelist, he may preach at any suitable place and time to any people willing to listen to him, the truth as it is in Jesus. Nay, more; though not numbered in the ranks of the recognized ministry, as a simple believer in Christ, any man has a right in his own person to proclaim the news. Ac. viii: 1-4;—indeed is commanded, I Peter iv: 10, as he has received the gift so to minister the same as a good steward of the manifold grace of God. It is the divine pleasure to save men by the sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. "Faith cometh by hearing;" and the voice that is "heard" proclaiming the truth may be that of pastor or evangelist or of simple believer. The truth acquires no efficacy from the fact that it is uttered by a church officer, or under the sanction of the church itself. Its efficacy consists in the fact that it is the truth, understood and believed, and carried home to the heart and conscience and worked into the experience by the Holy Spirit. Baptism is an official work performed according to the concurrent assent of the church and administrator; but the proclamation of the truth, while sometimes made by an officer, is in no sense "official," if by that be meant

that thus it receives peculiar sanction or peculiar efficacy; and it is just as authoritative and efficacious whether made in the presence or absence of a church.

#### CHURCH POLITY—"RE-BAPTISM."

Shall any one who has been immersed on a profession of faith ever, for any reason, be re-immersed?

*First:* Consider the question in reference to one who has appeared before the Conference of a Gospel church and given to it and the administrator a statement of Christian experience that secured fellowship; who was baptized by a competent administrator that thus carried into effect the concurrent conviction and intention of himself and the church.

*Second:* Consider the question in the case of one who had been immersed by the officer of another communion not of the same faith and order.

*First:* Should the ordinance ever be repeated in the case of one who has been regularly baptized? I answer, why should it be? Baptism is the prescribed method of professing religion and publicly putting on Christ. Why should it be repeated? If the forms and processes were all such as the Scriptures prescribe, in what consists the invalidity? and what is to be gained by going over them again? Has not the church member already professed religion by baptism; and has not that fact gone to record on the church book, and in the memories of the multitude who witnessed it? Is re-baptism advocated and demanded on the ground that the church member had gone into apostasy and sin? I answer, how can re-baptism compensate or atone for this? Let us beware, lest by this we make the rite an "*opus operatum*"—a process that not figuratively but literally washes away sin.

Is it said that the profession made has not been maintained, and the pledge to walk in newness of life not redeemed; and the church member should have another opportunity? I answer:

1. No Christian lives up in his own opinion to the profession and pledge he makes in baptism. Every day all have occasions to confess sins of heart or of life. If there is

force then in this claim, every Christian should not only once, but many times, be re-baptized.

2. On this principle every one who obtains restoration after just excommunication, should not only be permitted but required to submit to re-baptism.

3. Baptism is not designed to symbolize a restoration to Christianity from apostasy, but as a means of "putting on Christ" by publicly joining His ranks. The soldier, enlisted for the war, does not propose to obliterate the memory of his unfaithfulness, or even desertion, by re-enlisting; but by a confession of his unfaithfulness and wrong, and a steady and persistent application to duty. His name is already on the muster-roll, and it will signify nothing for him to put it there again. So, the soldier of the Cross by baptism, put on the uniform of the Captain of Salvation. He may have disgraced it, but he can furnish no compensation to it by publicly and ostentatiously putting it on again. What is needed is not a repetition of an empty profession, but a redemption of pledges made in that profession, by deeds and a well-ordered life. Not baptism is needed then, but reformation made obvious to all.

But it may be said, conversion is necessary as one of the qualifications for baptism; and the church member has discovered that when he was baptized he was unregenerate and without Christ. For the first time then he is qualified for the reception of the rite. To this I reply:

1. We baptize people not on the ground that they *have* faith in Christ, but, because they *profess* such faith. Our formula is, "On a profession of thy faith in Christ, I baptize thee," etc. If Peter and those with him failed to see that Simon, the sorcerer, when they received him for baptism, was in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, it would be foolish and presumptuous for us to baptize those who gain our fellowship as believers on any other grounds than on a profession of their faith; and the member, if any, who asks re-baptism confessed to a hope in Christ, and gave a reason for that hope that secured fellowship. The repetition of the ordinance cannot be demanded then on the principle that it was granted on grounds

now found to be fallacious and void. It is true now, and always has been true from the beginning that the individual obtained baptism on a *profession* of his faith.

2. It does not follow that because one calls in question the genuineness of his conversion, that that experience was really a delusion. I suppose there are times when almost every Christian renounces temporarily his hope. And then it is not every one who discriminates between the exercises of mind in conversion and those exercises consequent upon it. One may be surrounded by peculiar exciting influences now that stir the blood and excite the nerves unwontedly, and may have consequently an elevation of feeling never before experienced. Should he characterize this as alone the true conversion, and all else as spurious and void, he may not be accurate and wise. It does not necessarily follow, therefore, that he was not converted anterior to baptism simply because he believes it now.

But suppose the church member applies for re-baptism on the ground that he wickedly applied for it before when he knew that he was not a Christian, but sought church relations for the basest and most shameful purposes? I answer, what guaranty have we that he is not deceiving us now? We had his professions and confessions then; we have no more now; and it may not be impossible that he is seeking to advertize himself, or to throw ridicule upon the offices and processes of the church.

When the ordinance is administered by a competent administrator acting in conjunction with the church, to one who professes faith in Christ and gains Christian fellowship by a statement of Christian experience, it is technically and really valid; and can for no reason become vitiated and void. If one thus baptized confessed to a conversion that was not genuine and true, the remedy is to be found not in re-baptism. If by overt acts or words of his the discovery be made that such an one is yet in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, and he himself be content and unrepenting, the remedy is that which is applicable to all those who surreptitiously obtain membership. If he himself discovers, or thinks he does, that a

mistake has been made, the remedy is to be found not in the repetition of that which seems to him to have been an empty ceremony, but in reformation of heart and life. He has already made profession of religion. A repetition of it would not be "baptism" or "re-baptism," but, perhaps, ritualism—certainly, will-worship. Col. ii:23.

*Second.* Shall one be baptized who comes over to us from another communion: not of the same faith and order, who had been immersed in that communion?

The principles laid down in the previous discussions render it necessary that this question should be answered in the affirmative.

1. Baptism is a positive institution, and will admit of no modification. It must be just the thing that God prescribed, employed to subserve the very purpose He intended, or otherwise it is mere will-worship. Now as a means of professing religion, God has placed it under the control conjointly of the church and the minister. It is not enough that it is an immersion in public—it must have been such immersion agreed to and ordered by the church and minister acting in conjunction. The profession must have been made, under the auspices of the church, by the administration of its authorized officer or minister. Now, in nearly all the cases of those who thus come over to us, no "church," scriptural or otherwise, had any voice in the matter. The question was decided exclusively by Rector, or Preacher in charge, or Session; and that, too, not on the plea that no Gospel churches were accessible. Profession of religion is made technically by baptism, and there is no baptism within the bounds of a Gospel church that is technically correct, and therefore valid, that is not administered by the officer, for the time being, of such a church. The act must show that the minister and the church concur in opinion, that this one who has gained their Christian fellowship, of right ought to be assisted in thus making public profession of religion.

2. The parties who authorize and administer the rite must be themselves, in form, and technically, qualified. There must be a

Scriptural church and a qualified administrator. Now, it its maintained by all, I believe, excepting the Quakers, that there can be no church without water baptism. If immersion, as administered by us, is not baptism, then are our organizations not Scriptural churches; and all the baptisms administered by our ministers are null and void, on the ground that they have themselves never been baptized, and the religious organizations to which they belong are not Gospel churches. Let it be shown, then, that immersion as administered by the Baptists is not Scriptural baptism, and it will follow that none of our members going over to other organizations should be admitted without first submitting to the ordinance in its Scriptural form and signification. What we admit in the supposed case with regard to ourselves, we must conscientiously maintain in the real case, as it appears to us, in reference to all who come over to us from other communions.

3. In no other professed Christian organization does immersion signify the same thing as it does with us. Some perform the act to regenerate the soul; others, to secure or complete the remission of sins; others again, besides other reasons; because the candidates "choose" to drag them reluctant into the water; and others, without special signification, simply as a means of initiation into the religious body. Whatever the appearances then, the rite is a very different thing, in our opinion, from that prescribed in the New Testament. We do not think then that we repeat the ordinance when we baptize such on their coming to us. We simply aid them to make profession of religion in a form technically right, and with a signification corresponding to the Scriptural idea.

We have a New Testament example, in my opinion, bearing exactly on the point of the present inquiry: The "certain disciples" whom Paul found at Ephesus (Acts xix,) were baptized "unto John's baptism;" and professed that they never had heard "whether there be any Holy Ghost." These, as the result of Paul's instructions, and no doubt by his direction, "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The immersion

according to John's baptism, was invalid for two reasons:

1. The administrator was not competent. It is not said that they were baptized by John, but "unto John's baptism." John had no authorized successor or coadjutor. His mission was peculiar and exclusive; and it was completed when he made ready a people prepared for the Lord, Luke i:17; and authoritatively pointed him out as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, John i:30, 31. The administrator, therefore, who baptized in the name of John was self-appointed, and all his administrations unauthorized and void.

2. The ceremony performed by this unauthorized administrator did not have the significance of God's ordinance. The immersion that God prescribed is intended in part as the way of publicly professing allegiance to the Triune God: this administrator, no doubt, certainly his subjects, had not ever heard "whether there be any Holy Ghost." This shows that he was not even an intelligent disciple of John; for the latter in nearly all his public addresses instructed the people in regard to the persons and the relations of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The inspired writer says these "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." He does not call it a "re-baptism;" for the valid ordinance was administered then for the first time.

NOTE.—In the matter of preaching, Paul was disposed to silence no one. Some of his contemporaries preached Christ even of envy and strife, by way of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add afflictions to his bonds. Did he denounce them; and warn the public against the reception of their doctrine? Not at all. He rejoiced rather. "What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Ph. i: 15-18. The preaching of Christ by those not of his party, whatever their motive, he rejoices at, but the baptism of one, not authorized to administer the rite, he annuls and rejects. Why the difference? It is not found in the unwarranted supposition

that baptism possesses any operative efficacy, but because

1. Being the appointed means and method of making public profession of religion, God would guard against spurious professions. The decision of the question is not left then exclusively with the one who claims a hope in Christ. God requires him to go before the church and the minister, and virtually forbids him to proceed in his proposed profession unless he can secure their concurrent consent and co-operation. Baptism, therefore, is authoritative and official. But

2. Salvation is brought about by "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." There is no reason then, why the publication of the truth should be restricted or guarded. However defective men may be in doctrine or in life, we may rejoice when we know that they publish the genuine Gospel. True, the church is pre-eminently the "pillar and ground of the truth," and through its agencies the Gospel is, not officially, but systematically and permanently proclaimed; but let everybody know that there is no monopoly of this. "The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely." Rev xxii: 17.

The convert depends upon the minister and the church for permission to be baptized and for aid in submitting to the rite; but he need not have repudiated or discredited the truth because it reached him through other channels; nor need he have hesitated to believe it because he had not been formally authorized to do so by church and minister. Baptism is official; but, thank God, there is no official truth and no official salvation! "There is one God, and our mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Tim. ii:5; and every believer is made not only a king, but a priest unto God. Rev i:6. The New Testament, it is true, places the church and the minister between the convert and baptism: but church and minister, in the form of ecclesiasticism and sacerdotalism, are guilty of

usurpation and wrong when they plant themselves between the soul and the truth by which, through grace it is saved. They are guilty of presumption and blasphemy when they claim that God's truth obtains any efficacy of salvation because of their endorsement, authority or sanction. While we may require candidates for baptism to go before church and minister, and decline to recognize as baptized, all who refused or omitted to do so, we may rejoice that God's word is free; and we may unhesitatingly encourage all who know it and are trying to proclaim it. And God forbid that we should yield to the presumption of church or minister which would prohibit us from disseminating Gospel truth, so long as we have God's authority and command to do so! Church and minister have alone the prerogative to authorize baptism, but any one who understands the truth has the right and is in duty bound to disseminate and proclaim it. There is official baptism, but the New Testament knows nothing of official truth.

**CHURCH POLITY.—SHOULD BAPTISM BE ADMINISTERED TO ONE INTENDING TO UNITE WITH ANOTHER COMMUNION?—DIRECTION FOR THE PROPER ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM.**

Should baptism be administered to one who expresses an intention to unite with those not of the same faith and order? I answer, no; because

1. The minister, as has already been shown, has no right to decide a question of the kind, excepting in conjunction with a church. And it is to ministers that such applications are made. I have never heard that any one applied to a Baptist church for the rite alone, and not for membership also. Not a few of our ministers however have been applied to for this purpose by those who expressed a determination to join their relatives or friends in other communions. Our ministers then should decline, in part, because the co-operation of a church is necessary to make a baptism valid.

2. If the applicant be living beyond the reach of a gospel church, and asks baptism at the hands of a minister whom he casually meets, or who is acting as a missionary evan-

gelist, telling him at the same time that it is his intention to join another communion, he should decline; because, if he acquiesces,

(a.) He will be co-operating with the applicant in making a compromise with duty. He is willing to submit to the form and act of Scriptural baptism if by this he may be excused from joining a Scriptural church; and that thus he may secure ecclesiastical relations with those whose tastes suit him better, or who are dear to him by ties of consanguinity or affinity. Our ministers should not dare to enter into such collusions, whose tendencies are to stupify quickened consciences, and to encourage men to counsel with flesh and blood rather than implicitly obey God.

(b.) The minister who baptizes such an applicant aids and encourages him to give his influence to an organization that, in the opinion of them both, practices not truth but error on the subject of this gospel ordinance. The minister virtually, and inconsistently, says to him that the questions as to the act and the subjects of baptism are of no importance; that pouring and sprinkling are just as valid as immersion; and that unconscious infants are just as much entitled to the rite as believers who give a reason of the hope that is within them. The minister deceives himself when he supposes that he is aiding the candidate in the discharge at least of one duty, and thus, as far as he goes, in the maintenance of the right. He is helping him rather to hold and practice the truth in unrighteousness. If one who has already been baptized and joined his church should leave and unite himself to a people holding different views and practices on the subject of the ordinance, he would advocate withdrawing fellowship from him. On what principle, then, could he co-operate with and aid another in his expressed purpose to join the same organization?

**SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE PROPER ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM.**

I have never seen in book or newspaper article any discussion on this subject. The silence of our writers has always struck me with surprise. In homiletics and other treatises to aid the ministry, our young preachers receive line upon line and precept upon precept; and, if they are not perfect, thoroughly

furnished for all the duties and offices of their profession, it is not for lack of detailed instructions in regard to the theory and practice of it. Why is it that instruction is withheld from the symbolical preacher? Is it because the ordinance is such a simple thing and its administration so easy and obvious? I answer, there is always a wrong as well as a right way of performing the most simple and obvious act; and perhaps it would not be difficult to find those who can testify that they have witnessed administrations of the ordinance that gave pain rather than pleasure; that hindered rather than promoted the truth. Has not this symbolical preaching a philosophy and a theory as well as oral preaching? And is it not as practicable to exchange ideas—to give and receive instruction—on the one as on the other? An Aquila and Priscilla can take aside an Apollon, eloquent indeed but deficient in knowledge of the gospel, and teach him the way of the Lord more perfectly; and why have not our wiser brethren taught us the better way, and thus prevented us from marring God's impressive ordinance by our bungling administration of it? Perhaps my experienced brethren will excuse me if I venture to make some suggestions on the subject to my younger brethren.

We shall perhaps make an exhaustive analysis of the subject in this connection if we consider it.

*First.* In the facilities to be furnished the administrator for the performance of the rite; and

*Second.* The way in which the administrator should perform it.

*First.* The facilities to be furnished the administrator. In addition to a suitable subject of whom sufficient perhaps has already been said, nothing is needed for the administrator but WATER of the right quality and quantity. Some have maintained that not water simply but that liquid in the form of a river or other stream of sufficient size and depth is needed essentially. I do not so read the Scriptures. While we are told that John baptized the Saviour and others in the river Jordan, there is no stress laid on the idea of "river." John said, Mat. iii: 11, "I indeed baptize you with water"—or as it ought to be translated, "I indeed immerse you in water"—

he does not say, in a river. The Eunuch said to Philip, "see here is water"—not, see here is a river. Peter at the house of Cornelius said, "Who can forbid water?"—not who can forbid a river or stream of water? And John was baptizing near to Salin not because there was a river, but because there was "much water" there.

Water, as an element, is all that is essential to the ordinance. It may be a stream large or small, or standing water in the form of lake or pond, or pool. It may be such as nature supplies, or the result of man's design in the form of a pool at a spring or on a brook, or in that of a baptistry in a house of worship. Water, in which the subject can be immersed, is all that is required.

But it may be said that the ordinance is much more impressive when administered in a stream. A large crowd of both sexes and all ages in varied costume strung along the banks of a stream presents a very picturesque and impressive appearance; and, therefore, the rite had better be administered in a river or other large stream. While we assent to the picturesque, and impressiveness, and suitability of this scene, we may say that the crowd occupying the slopes of the hills on both sides of a pool produces the same effect upon the imagination. And in neither may the rite be more impressive than when administered in a baptistry in presence of a crowded house. In fact, taste, and custom, and the imagination, and even prejudice, may have much to do in giving us convictions for or against any one of these places or ways. Water is the element in which the subject is to be immersed. The fact that it is running or standing, in a house or out of doors, is a mere circumstance that enters not at all into the essence of the rite.

Water then being obtained for its impressiveness and appositeness as a part of the symbol, it is of the first importance,

1. That it should be pure and clean. Ministers should refuse to administer the rite in old mill and other ponds whose bottoms are covered several inches thick with sediment. This is stirred up on the first provocation; and is suggestive of any thing else than purity, solemnity and decency. A creek or river whose

banks or bottoms are covered with mud through which administrator and subject make their way painfully and with difficulty while they walk, and in which when they stand they stick, should never be used for the purposes of baptism so long as a pool by a spring or a brook can be constructed. It is clean water that is pleaded for; it need not be transparent—indeed, for obvious reasons, it would be better for it not to be. Water, clouded though clean, is the kind that best subserves the purposes of the ordinance.

For a proper administration of the ordinance, there is demanded, again,

2. A sufficient depth of water.

(a). That the baptism may be easy to the administrator. Where there is sufficient depth, but little strength is necessary to place under water the small portion of the subject that is out of it, and no strength at all for the emersion; for the upward pressure of the water, and the unconscious action of the subject, will bring his person to the top. The hand of the administrator need do but little more than to give the proper direction to the buoyancy, and give steadiness to the movement. If the water be shallow, whatever is done successfully must be done by strength alone.

(b). When the water is deep, the individual, when immersed, is placed with his person making a large angle with the bottom and not nearly horizontal or indeed quite parallel to it, as the case would be if the water were shallow. In the former case, strangling need not occur, in the latter, it is well nigh inevitable.

(c). It is more easy to control the candidate where there is sufficient depth of water.

*Second.* Some hints to the administrator to govern him in the administration of the ordinance:

1. The course to be adopted by him to give a timid subject confidence. Some people have a natural dread of water; some are nervously affected by the contact of the cold liquid with their bodies; and some have an indefinable dread that some disaster, they know not what, will attend upon their present attempt to take up the cross. These timid people, it is proper though to say, are the exceptions. The great majority, according to my observation, have no thought of

danger or inquietude, but enter into the water as a privilege, and with confidence and joy. But these timid people cannot help their weakness and idiosyncrasy; and the minister can easily assist them. In the first place, he can baptize first one who has no timidity; and thus by demonstration show that the danger and discomfort are mere fancies. It would be very unfortunate for the one first baptized to be agitated and misbehave. Such an one, through mental and bodily sympathy, would throw into a panic all the rest. For the purpose of avoiding this danger, and also for the additional reason that the ladies should be detained in wet clothes as short a time as possible, it is always expedient to baptize the gentlemen first.

Now, suppose we see a lady agitated, what shall we do? Remonstrate with her, or protest to her that there is no danger, or in any other way direct her attention to her fears? By no means. This would only aggravate the case. The thing to do is to divert her attention from her fears, by acting as if they have no existence, and by directing her attention to other topics. It has a wonderful influence to talk with her, in an under tone as you descend with her into the water, not about her fears, but about her Saviour, and her privileges, and her hopes. Go in slowly and deliberately. If the cold water makes her catch her breath, stop, and say to her in encouraging tones that you will wait until she can thoroughly command herself; and request her to counteract the nervous excitement by wetting her face. Do not proceed to immerse her until she has done as she can to control herself; for it is certain that her efforts will be successful.

2. The manner in which the act of baptism is to be performed. Suppose then that the administrator and the subject are standing in the water side by side. Now, there are but two things to be done, (1) to place the body under the water; and (2) to cause it to rise out of the element again; and the administrator is endowed with two hands, each one of which is competent to perform one of these acts. Now, how shall the candidate be immersed, *i. e.* put under the water? Shall the minister take hold of a part



of his dress—as *e. g.* the coat collar of a gentleman—and draw, or drag, or jerk him under the water? This would be very bungling, and, to serious persons who witness it, excessively painful. In some instances, I have seen the minister stand nearly behind the candidate, and absolutely *jerk* him under the water, causing his head to “dive” and his feet to appear on the surface. *The dress should never be grasped.* One hand alone should be used to gently but quickly *press* the subject under the water; the other should be used alone and exclusively in lifting him out. One hand devoted to each of these acts can better perform them than if both attempted to perform together each. There is no difficulty for one hand to effect the immersion, if the force be applied to the proper part of the person; and one finger of the other hand can raise the person to the surface; because it would be assisted by the upward pressure of the water, and by the unconscious effort of the subject.

Suppose now that the administrator is standing to the right of the candidate, slightly to the rear, and is about to perform the immersion. He causes the candidate to put the fingers of each hand within those of the other. The hands thus placed, the minister gently but firmly grasps, and in this manner locks. Thus standing, the candidate's hands will rest on his person about the pit of his stomach. Should the force be applied here, it may not secure the immersion of the face and head. But if, at the close of the formula, the hands are raised to the upper part of the breast near its junction with the neck, and the force applied there, nothing is more easy than to secure a graceful immersion. In this, the whole work is to be done by the right hand; the left is not to touch the person until his body is descending into the water, and then only to steady it, and to, be in position promptly to cause it to emerge from the water. To do this last it needs and should receive no assistance from the right hand. There are two acts to be done. Let the right hand alone do the one, and the left hand alone the other.

**CHURCH POLITY—CAN THE SISTERS VOTE IN THE RECEPTION OF MEMBERS? THE SCRIPTURAL POSITION OF WOMAN IN THE CHURCHES OF JESUS CHRIST.**

Can the sisters vote in the reception of members? Why not? Are they not as able as the

brethren to apprehend the points of a Christian experience; and to feel and manifest fellowship? Is it not as much their interest and duty as it is that of the other sex, to guard the purity and harmony of the church against the intrusion of unconverted or otherwise unworthy persons? There has been in all past time, and there is now, much confusion of mind in regard to the position woman occupies in a church of Christ—as to what are her duties and responsibilities, her rights and her privileges. All admit that by unobtrusive piety, by an orderly walk and a godly conversation, she can exert potently an influence in favor of the cause of Christ. It is even admitted, that at home, in the privacy of the domestic circle, she cannot only act but speak in favor of the cause of Christ. The Grandmother, Lois, and the Mother, Eunice may, by precept and example, so teach and influence the young Timothy that from a child he may know the Holy Scriptures—that, under God's blessing, he may like them, have “unfeigned faith,” II. Tim. i : 5, and be made “wise unto salvation.” iii : 15. No one places a restriction upon woman in her own sphere, the domestic circle. But can she say or do nothing in public for the interest and advancement of the cause of Christ? Does God intend that as a church member she shall be a mere cypher? What rights, what duties, and what restrictions, do the Scriptures prescribe for her in this connection?

Whatever may be true in other things, it is evident, and it ought to be admitted by all, that the Scriptures forbid a Christian woman to be a preacher or a lecturer to promiscuous crowds. God not only does not call a woman to preach, but He specially and emphatically forbids her to do so: “But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” I. Tim. ii : 12. “Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak,” etc. I. Cor. xiv : 34. The injunction, to “keep silence,” and the prohibition “to speak,” are to be limited to public speaking; for all admit that the sisters can sing in the public congregation, and relate their Christian experience when they apply for baptism. Upon what is this prohibition to preach based? I answer,

1. Not on the ground that the sisters have

not the piety requisite to qualify them to be preachers. Woman's piety and devotion will not suffer in comparison with those of man. No woman forsook Christ in the hour of His great extremity. An honored Peter, though when the Master is arrested is seized with the same panic that caused all the disciples to forsake Him and fly, and even when rallying somewhat, he yet follows afar off with a state of mind ready when the emergency comes to deny Him with cursing and swearing. Humble women, "daughters of Jerusalem," accompany the Saviour on His way to calvary, after condemnation. No fears of the authorities or of the mob deterred them, but they "bewailed and lamented him" so significantly and unreservedly as to arrest His attention and elicit from him the public remark, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Luke xxiii: 27, 28. And at the last hour when Jesus "cried with a loud voice and yielded up the ghost," "many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him." Matt. xxvii: 55. The name of only one of His male disciples, is mentioned as being present on this interesting occasion, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." John xix: 26. Woman was not only last at the cross but first at the sepulchre; and to pious women Jesus first appeared after His resurrection. Matt. xxviii: 9; Mark xvi: 9; John xx: 16. In all ages, woman has had at least as much as man of that piety which manifests itself by regular attendance at the House of God, and in a devout participation in the worship of the sanctuary. Women are forbidden to preach then not on the ground that they cannot have the requisite piety.

2. Nor are they denied the privilege to preach because they are destitute of the needed capacity to understand and communicate the truth as it is in Jesus. All educators know that, while there are mental characteristics peculiar to each sex, the feminine intellect is on an average at least, equal to that of the masculine. But the sex have vindicated their capacity in the presence of the world. How many gifted pens, wielded by female hands, are now instructing and delighting mankind! To how many is the privilege and ability given, through the press, to invite and lead

sinners to Christ; and to build up Christians on their most holy faith; for though God rebuke the pulpit against them He does not prohibit to them the use of the printing press. Who has not enjoyed the privilege in the social circle of listening to a "Mother in Israel," ripening for Heaven, as she talks about the doctrines of God's word, and the methods of God's grace! Priscilla was not permitted to "teach" (διδασκειν) I. Tim. ii: 12, or to "speak" (λαλειν) I. Cor. xiv: 34, but it was her privilege to "expound" (ἐξήτευν) Ac. xviii: 26, to the eloquent Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly. The woman of Samaria was able to communicate effectively the truth about Jesus. She "saith (λέγει), John iv: 28, to the men. Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified (μαρτυρούσης) he told me all that ever I did."

3. Nor is the prohibition imposed because women are not competent to make public speeches. The history of all times has shown that they may be skilled in elocution. In our own times, the stage, the platform, and, in defiance of God's prohibition, the pulpit, furnish not a few instances of women able to address promiscuous audiences gratefully, forcibly and eloquently.

4. Women are prohibited from preaching, not because it is forbidden them to take any public part whatever in the promulgation of the truth; or in labors for the advancement of the cause of Christ. The Prophet, Joel ii: 28, 29, foretold that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;" and Luke tells us that "Philip the Evangelist" "had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy," Ac. xxi: 9. Paul testified that Priscilla was his "helper in Christ Jesus." Rom. xvi: 3; and in Phil. iv: 3, he entreats his "true yokefellow," "help those women which labored with me in the Gospel." In all the departments of church activity women are found to be efficient workers. In the Sunday-school, in visiting the sick and afflicted, in welcoming strangers to the benefits of church influence, in maintaining the decency and comfort of the house of worship, in the sympa-

thy and encouragement they show to the pastor in his responsible and difficult labors, in the contributions to the finances which their address and their own hands make, and in the influence they exert for the salvation of souls and for the maintenance of sound doctrine by their "sayings" like the woman of Samaria and by their expoundings" like Pricilla, the women of the churches have and fill a boundless field of influence and usefulness. Every pastor has occasion to speak of them gratefully as "those women which labored with me in the Gospel," and as "my helpers in Christ Jesus."

If all these things be true, why is woman denied the privilege of "preaching" the Gospel?

1. Because God has made her the queen of the family, and He would require or authorize nothing which would take her away from her domestic realm. The family is God's original institution which has survived the fall. True, there must be a head to it—a power to decide in the last resort—and He has made the husband that head, giving as a reason for such decision, "Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." I. Tim. ii:13,14. But by requiring the husband to love the wife, all despotism and tyranny are made impossible; and a headship secured which seeks not its own will but the wishes of her placed in nominal subordination. *God has given to the husband no authority over the wife excepting that which is administered by love.* The wife is made the head of the domestic household; and she reigns there not to gratify her own willfulness, but to please her husband, and to secure the interests of her children and herself. The influence of the true wife and mother is well nigh omnipotent; and God would secure it, and preserve it, for that institution which is at once the place of nurture, and, according to His purpose, the home of all the people in the world. In the family are the people trained for the duties and the conflicts of life; and in the family may all find shelter, and comfort, and a home. It is God's will that the "women marry, bear children and *guide the house,*"

etc. I. Tim. v:16. Anything which would call woman away from the domestic circle, and thus deprive the family of her gentle and potent influence, would be a calamity to the world; and therefore, God forbids her to be a public speaker.

2. Nor is this a sacrifice required at her hands for the public good. The domestic circle is the place for her own development and happiness. That is the soil in which her own gentle virtues grow and thrive, as well as bear fruit; and there her character expands to the true proportions of womanhood. A gifted lady, now in Heaven, once said to me that God required of husband and wife the thing that to each was most difficult. Of the husband, who, engaged in the business and conflicts of life, was in danger of forgetting his wife, He required LOVE: to the wife He laid stress on that which He knew would to her have the only difficulty, viz: OBEYDENCE. He said nothing at all to her of love; for He knew that nothing would be more natural and easy to her than to render that. Whatever may be thought of the former part of the statement, all will accept the last proposition as true—woman is formed to love and to be loved. Let her feel sure of the affection of husband and children, and she has all that heart desires for this world. Now, let the wife and mother be enticed from her proper sphere, and be introduced into public life—let her ascend the platform and the pulpit, to say nothing of the bustings, and not only will home run to waste, and children to ruin, but she will lose her own delicacy, and loveliness, and feminineness, and harden into the masculine woman. From public life she may obtain notoriety and intoxication, but she will never secure true admiration such as her feminine heart craves; and she will be a stranger to true happiness. No woman can subserve the purposes of her creation, and secure her own happiness, who revolutionizes her own nature, and unsexes herself. God meant to secure to the churches woman's true influence; and, therefore, He prohibited to her the pulpit and the platform. Let her not murmur at this. Let her thank God rather, and continue to wield her own true influence—an influence second to none from earthly source

operating in the cause of God and humanity, for the interests of the church and the world.

Granting then, that the pulpit is closed to woman, why, I ask, should she be denied a voice on questions touching fellowship, and in the selection of a pastor? Is she not as competent as those of the other sex? Has she not as great an interest at stake? Is not the cause of Christ as dear to her, and are there no responsibilities in the premises attached to her? The principles and influences that operate in the ministry have no place here. By taking a part appropriate to her in these questions, she is not enticed from the domestic circle and drawn into notoriety and before the public gaze. Her feminine character is not jeopardized nor her happiness sacrificed.

But some one may object that the right to vote implies the right to debate; and therefore the requirement of woman to be silent in the churches demands that she refrain from voting. To this, I reply that speaking and voting in a deliberative body do not necessarily go together. In Congress, delegates from Territories are permitted to debate but prohibited from voting—so the sisters in the churches are permitted to vote though by implication forbidden to debate.

Is it said, again, that the sisters would shrink from the sound of their own voices pronouncing the words aye; and no; then, I reply, the difficulty can be obviated if, on all matters touching fellowship, the question be put in the following form: "Brethren and sisters, all in favor," etc., "will show it by holding up the right hand."

God did not design that the sisters should be cyphers in the churches; and it is clearly their right and duty to vote at least in the selection of a pastor, and on the reception and discipline of members.

#### CHURCH POLITY—UNANIMITY IN THE RECEPTION OF MEMBERS.

Can one be received into membership on the vote simply of a majority? The principle of fellowship requires that there shall be no dissenting voice. For an applicant to be received notwithstanding the protest of one already a member is to introduce discord and division among those who are organized on

the principle of confidence, fellowship and love. Baptist churches, therefore, have generally a rule to the effect that all questions touching fellowship must be decided by unanimous vote. This must, however, not be interpreted to mean that a minority, or even an individual, can rule in questions of fellowship. The principle must be administered in perfect consistency with the doctrine that in the last resort the majority must rule. It simply means that on the first vote the applicant is not to be received by a bare majority. Should any opposition be made, by speech or vote, proceedings are to be arrested for the time. The brother objecting is to be heard in support of his dissent. If he be able to speak in public he may be asked then and there to give the reason of his opposition; or, if for any reason circumstances may make it expedient, the case may be postponed, and a committee appointed to confer with the brother and report at a subsequent conference. When his reasons are in full before the church, it should decide upon their validity or invalidity. If they are valid, the church should yield to them and gently request the candidate to withdraw his application. Should he refuse to do so, then the church by unanimous vote should decline to receive him: If the objections are considered to be invalid, the objector should be asked to waive them and acquiesce. If he does so, well; the difficulty is removed, and the church has, in a sense, unanimity. If he refuses, then the church is to take him under dealing and labor patiently with him to induce him to discontinue his factious opposition. Should he persist notwithstanding, the church may proceed to excommunicate him. The applicant has rights and duties as well as one already in membership; and the church is just as much bound to protect the one as the other. It is the right and the duty of a believer to profess religion in baptism, and to unite himself to the company of Christ's organized people; and it is the right and the duty of the church to aid him in these steps and processes. While unanimity is to be required and fellowship is to be maintained, these are to be secured not by requiring the majority to submit to the minority unless convinced by the argu-

ments of the latter; but in the fear of God by meekly, through patient labor, bringing the dissentients to acquiesce; or faithfully, though with sorrow, putting away from among them those who factiously, without justifying reason, obstruct the church in what it considers right and obligatory.

Thus much may be said in general terms. A specific statement and discussion of the question will bring us to the same conclusion.

Objections to an applicant may be founded either on personal grounds, or on general principles.

1. Suppose a church member objects to an applicant that the latter had done him a personal wrong for which he had never in word or deed made reparation, in that case what should be the process? The answer will vary according to the replies given to the two following questions:

Did the candidate know that the church member objecting had valid complaints against him?

Did the objector know that the candidate against whom he objects intended to make application, and, though he had opportunity to tell him privately his complaints with the intention and the hope of having them satisfied, declined or omitted to seek a private interview in the spirit of meekness, but intentionally waited until he could emphasize his opposition by public objection?

(a.) What shall be done when objection is made on the ground of personal grievance, and the candidate knew of such grievance and yet made no effort to remove it? If he is a man of intelligence, and it is evident that he intentionally disregarded this disability, and willfully presented himself with a hostile spirit towards the church member, this would furnish ground sufficient for his unanimous rejection; for it would show that he does not have the Spirit of Christ: If he is not intelligent, and it is evident that though knowing the complaint against him he did not mean to ignore the feelings of others and his own duty, but acted through inadvertency or ignorance, the church should postpone final action in his case, and instruct him and aid him to settle his personal difficulty with the member objecting.

(b) Suppose the objector knew that the application would be made, but withheld all interposition until he could publicly dissent? In that case, the church member deserves rebuke, and should receive it. But his wrong would not entirely neutralize the force of his objection. The church has obtained possession of the fact that there is discord between these two, and that there can be, in the present state of things, no fellowship between them. It must, therefore, stop proceedings until attempts be made in Scriptural way to settle the personal difficulty. The case, I suppose, is embraced somewhat under the principle laid down by the Saviour in the 18th chapter of Matthew, and somewhat under the principle enunciated by Paul in I. Cor. v; because the church member has violated the rule laid down to govern "private officers," and has therefore, become, in a sense, a "public offender." The church should, therefore, require him to make public confession of his wrong, and then help him formally, by committee, or informally, by the voluntary action of its private members, to settle his private difficulty with the applicant. If it shall be discovered that the latter is guilty of a wrong which he refuses or neglects to atone for, as far as in his power, that will furnish sufficient grounds for his rejection. If the objector is found to be in the wrong, and he maintains an unforgiving spirit though all reparation possible in word and deed is offered, then he should be dealt with as contumacious and disorderly. The applicant, who gives evidence of conversion and of Christian spirit, has a right to enter into the church even though that right can be secured only at the expense of the expulsion of one already in, who is a disturber of the peace.

2. Suppose objection be made on the ground of a doubt of the reality and genuineness of the conversion professed? Of course, such doubt is entitled to the most candid and thoughtful consideration. The individual—or other minority—has no prejudices or personal feelings in the matter, he is influenced simply by a desire to be faithful, according to his judgment, and in the fear of God. He puts up no claim expressed or implied to infallibility. When, therefore, the great body

of the church pause at his instance and reconsider the case, all further responsibility in the premises is taken from him, and he can cheerfully acquiesce in the decision of the majority. If he refuse, it is because he is headstrong, and contumacious, and factious. Should he persist, he subjects himself to discipline, and, in the last resort, to expulsion; for, as already observed, it is the duty of the church to aid the believer in making public profession of religion by baptism and in uniting himself with one of the organized companies of Christ's people.

In like manner, the principle requiring unanimity in all matter touching fellowship, must be administered in questions of discipline. Here also the majority must rule in the last resort. If the minority, after patient efforts to satisfy them refuse to acquiesce, they are to be taken under dealing as factious and disturbers of the peace. Of course though, all such cases are to be managed with gentleness and patience.

#### CHURCH POLITY—RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP—CONSTITUTION OF A CHURCH.

The candidate for baptism and for admission into the church having, by a recital of Christian experience, obtained Christian fellowship, it is proper for that fellowship to be manifested and expressed in some form. This is done not only by the vote of the church but by the right hand of fellowship. This symbolical act, giving the right hand, has been expressive always of confidence, and sometimes of fellowship also. To grasp each other by the right hand has been from remote antiquity a mode of salutation. It originated in barbarous times. By delivering up mutually to each other the right hand which wields the weapons, they gave the pledge that they were peaceable, and meant each other no harm. From that possibly originated the theory of Greek and Roman mythology that fidelity resides in the palm of the right hand. When palm meets palm then there is a mutual pledge of fidelity and confidence.

The Scriptures do not inform us that the right hand of fellowship was given to members admitted into the churches in apostolic times. Nothing is more reasonable though than to infer that it was; for it was a com-

mon thing for it to be given in other connections as an expression of fellowship. Paul, referring to an interesting part of his own experience, says, "When James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." Gal. ii: 9.

Granting that the right hand of fellowship is appropriate as a symbol in this connection, the question is, by whom shall it be given?—by the pastor, or by every individual member of the church? In answer, it may be said that there are two kinds of fellowship involved in the series of transactions that terminate in the reception into all the rights and privileges of the church. *First*, Christian fellowship; *second*, church fellowship. The former is secured by a statement of Christian experience; the latter includes this and also the idea of relationship and fraternity.

*First*. Who shall give the right hand of Christian fellowship? I answer, all those whose Christian fellowship has been secured, and who have expressed that fellowship by a vote. The pastor then, as a Christian, and all the members of the church, should give this symbol of fraternity. And this should be done as soon as pastor and people pass upon the Christian experience related, and concur in the opinion that the candidate should be baptized.

*Second*. But when the profession of religion has been made by baptism, and the candidate is prepared to enter into the membership previously by vote conditionally granted, then this should be signaled by a formal and official recognition of the fact that all the conditions have been complied with, and also of him as one entitled to such membership. By the right hand of fellowship publicly given, he should be cordially welcomed to all the rights and privileges of the church. This is to be done by the pastor alone in his official relations to the church as its authorized representative. This act may be made impressive and useful if accompanied by appropriate remarks to the new member in the presence of the congregation. A suitable time for such public recognition is on the same day with the bap-

tism, either immediately before or immediately after the sermon. If, however, there be a revival season, when the Lord is adding to the church daily the saved, it may be expedient to give the official right hand of fellowship to all the new accessions together, at the close of the protracted meeting. This is, however, a matter of expediency and convenience. Suitable remarks addressed to the newly admitted, on that interesting occasion, will never be forgotten by them, and will be very impressive to the congregation who witness and hear.

There are two kinds of fellowship, then, Christian and church; and each of these should be symbolized and expressed by the right hand of fellowship—the former, by the pastor and all the members; the latter, officially, after the baptism, by the pastor alone, in behalf of the church.

#### CONSTITUTION OF A CHURCH.

Who has the right to decide upon the expediency of constituting a new church, and what are the forms and ceremonies to be observed in such constitution? On these subjects we have not any direct precepts in the New Testament. We have not even any example showing the processes of organization. We have sufficient evidence though that such organized bodies were formed wherever a sufficient number of baptized believers existed. The Scriptures make us very sure that no church, or any company of churches, exercised the prerogative to *authorize* the constitution of a new church. The church at Jerusalem neither alone nor in conjunction with others granted charters, as some human societies do, on the authority of which new bodies were organized. The formation of these bodies seems to have occurred as a matter of course wherever in new territory a sufficient number had been converted and baptized. On the same principle, in new territory now, any company of baptized believers of sufficient numbers, with the ordained minister, under whose ministry they were converted and baptized, can organize themselves into a church of Jesus Christ without waiting or asking for any authority from any existing churches anywhere on earth. Nay more, if for any reason the minister by whom they were baptized be not able to co-operate with them, and they

have among themselves information of the Scriptures and of church order adequate to enable them to organize, they need not wait for any earthly authority. God has given them the right to enter into church relations; to covenant with each other to be governed by the laws of Christ's house; to watch over one another in love; and to maintain public worship and the preaching of the Gospel.

The above affirmations are to be understood as applicable in all their force to those companies of baptized believers away from the territories of existing churches—as, e.g. in the case of people converted under the ministry of a missionary in a heathen land. The principle remains the same, but its application is somewhat modified in the case of a company who propose to organize themselves into a church in the vicinity of such bodies already in existence. While these last have no right to confer authority, they ought to be consulted, and their co-operation sought; because,

1. Their interest may be involved in the movement. It may be proposed to weaken them by withdrawing from them the constituents of the new body. In that case comity will be involved; and the risk will be run of producing alienation and confusion and division, and thus damage to the cause of Christ.

2. Churches contiguous, already in existence ought to be consulted in reference to the wisdom and expediency of the proposed new constitution. It may unwisely be proposed to erect a feeble interest that cannot possibly— for want of sufficient material—grow into a condition of efficiency and usefulness. This is a question on which surrounding churches do feel an interest, and have a right to exercise a moral influence. The case becomes intensified if the new organization proposes to draw members from the churches around, and to occupy territory now held by them and needed for their efficiency. In how many regions in our country has the cause of Christ been crippled since the war by the formation of little feeble bodies, in little neighborhoods, in violation of this principle! How much more reprehensible and deplorable is it when, through schism and secession, churches are formed not only without the concurrence of those already in existence, but in defiance of their dissent and protest!

3. It is of the first importance to all concerned—and especially to the new interest—that it should have the recognition and endorsement of the churches already in existence. There are so many denominations, unhappily, in the world, and so many shades of opinion on faith and practice, that to secure confidence the new interest needs some way by which a knowledge of its character may be communicated to the world, and some authoritative endorsement of that character as Scriptural and right. This is secured by asking contiguous churches to appoint their ministers or some of their members, or both, to form a presbytery or council to be present to witness, and, as far as legitimate, on invitation, to take part in such organization. These presbyteries, or councils, sometimes act as if they think it is their prerogative to constitute a church. Here, again, is a notion and a practice foreign to our polity, and drawn from the theory and practice of the hierarchies and semi-hierarchies by whom we are surrounded. The brethren and sisters proposing to enter into the new organization, constitute themselves into a church. This they do by agreeing to articles of faith, to show to themselves that they are of our mind, and to prove to all others that they are of the Scriptural faith and order; by covenanting together to keep house for God; that they will mutually watch over each other in love; that they will maintain Scripture ordinances, public worship and the preaching of the Gospel—in short, that they will use their individual and combined influence for the maintenance and dissemination of the truth. The presbytery or council simply recognize and endorse them as a valid church of the right faith and order.

The mistake referred to above grows naturally out of the fact that as the presbytery or council is composed of brethren more able and experienced than those usually in the company to be organized, it is natural that they should be invited to take a leading part in the proceedings apposite to the occasion. Besides, as they are invited and sent here to look into all the details of the organization, it is most obvious and easy for them to be put in control of all those details. Consequently, it is usual for the presbytery to consider the reasons given for the organization, and pass upon the validity of such reasons; if sa-

ified, to examine all the church letters held by the company organizing; to inspect and pass upon their articles of faith and church covenant; and, if satisfied, by giving them the right hand of fellowship, to make public "recognition" of the fact that these brethren and sisters are properly "constituted" a church of the Scriptural faith and order. The church "constitutes" itself; the presbytery or council merely "recognizes," endorses and bears testimony of it. But whatever may be the abstract right, it is never expedient for a company of baptized believers to constitute a new church when all the contiguous churches, composed of competent and candid brethren, protest against it, and refuse to take part in its recognition.

#### CHURCH POLITY—ARTICLES OF FAITH.

Should churches adopt articles of Faith? It is not reasonable to suppose that the church at Jerusalem did so. In the first place, the books of the New Testament had not then been written, from which to extract a system of belief. Then again, the church was under the instruction and control of the apostles to whom the Master had promised plenary inspiration in reference to all those things that pertained to Gospel doctrines and to church order. Besides, there was no danger of its being mistaken for a synagogue of the Jews. Its doctrines and practices ran no risk of being confounded with those of "the Jews religion." The members of the church at Jerusalem professed confidence in an allegiance to one whom the Jews had despised, rejected and crucified. No creed was necessary then to distinguish it from the only other religious organization existing in its vicinity.

In process of time, though, as the Judaizing teachers and other errorists propagated their tenets, and gained adherents—as "the mystery of iniquity" began to work, modifying opinions and practices, it would not be surprising if churches, subsequently formed in other places, noticed the dogmas prevalent, and discriminated between those enunciated by the apostles and those promulgated by errorists. The church at Jerusalem itself, with the apostles and elders, Ac. 15, furnished a creed for all Gentiles as to matters touching the law of Moses; and no doubt, placed it upon its



own church records. It would not be surprising if the letter written by this conference to the church at Antioch was not only kept on file but copied also into the records of the latter church. Certainly, it may be assumed that, on the matters to which it referred, it became the creed of the Antioch church. Being furnished under Divine inspiration, it was not at all unlikely also that it was, if not a written, at least an oral creed for all the Gentile churches formed subsequently in that age. But it must be admitted, this last is nothing to the point. Suppose they did thus accept this as a creed, that was to adopt the very words of inspiration for that purpose, and not a human interpretation of those words. And the question is not whether it is proper for a church to accept the word of God as its creed, but whether it can adopt, as such, a human abstract and compilation from such word. To this it may be unhesitatingly answered:

1. It is clearly improper for a church to adopt a creed, in order to make it a substitute for the Bible, to instruct the members what they are to believe and how they are to live. The word of God alone is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Any creed that is intended to shew aside this, or to be offered as a substitute for it, is pernicious and impious.

2. A creed would be clearly improper if it should be adopted as a code for the government of the church. If applicants for membership are confronted with the creed, and required to assent to and sign all the articles of it as a condition precedent to admission—if the members are governed not by the laws of Christ as expressed in the New Testament, but by the laws of a church as expressed by its creed, then such church virtually claims to have legislative as well as judicial and executive power. But Christ is the only Law-giver; and His complete code is found in the New Testament.

(a). He never requires that one shall be a doctrinal proficient before he can be competent for membership in a Gospel church. The only qualifications the New Testament code requires are repentance towards God,

faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and baptism on a profession of such repentance and faith. A church is not a circle of doctrinal proficient, but a school in which learners, acquainted with only the "first principle," by instruction and study, may "go on unto perfection," and may "know as the follow on to know." Any church, that offers to babes in Christ ponderous articles of faith to assent to and subscribe, not only perpetrates a sham, but is guilty of usurping the prerogative to legislate for Christ.

(b). If, in the enforcement of discipline, members are arraigned for the violation of human articles of faith, and no reference be made to the Scriptures in their indictment—if they are tried by a fallible human creed rather than by the inspired New Testament code, the body thus doing is guilty of pushing aside Christ's law and of substituting enactments of its own. No Gospel church needs articles of faith as a system of laws by which to govern its members. The New Testament furnished by Christ, the Great Law-giver, constitutes that system.

These remarks are intended simply to condemn the adoption and the use of articles of faith as the law for the discipline and the government of the church. They have no reference to such cases as where a church passes resolutions applying the principles of the Scriptures to such modern usages and practices as, though objectionable, are not mentioned in them by name. But let churches take care lest even here, governed by prejudice or fanaticism, they condemn that which the word of God does not reprehend, and thus be found presumptuously legislating for Christ. Away with all creeds which are intended to be, or which are used as, substitutes for Christ's inspired code for the government of the churches!

3. But articles of faith may be not only harmless but highly useful (1) to show to those who covenant together that they agree in doctrine and practice; for how can even two walk together except they be agreed? and (2) to make it manifest to other churches that they are of the right faith and order; for, unfortunately, there are in the world many religious bodies called churches that conflict with one another in doctrinal belief and practice. To make manifest what they are,

and to secure the confidence of similar bodies, it is not only right, but newly organized churches are in duty bound, to adopt and exhibit articles showing their faith and order. This is all the use that Baptist churches have for creeds and confessions of faith. They demand of applicants for baptism and membership only a statement of Christian experience. They never require them to assent or subscribe to articles of faith. In them members are never indicted for violation of the creed, but for an infraction of the law of Christ.

For the purposes expressed above, all churches should be "constituted" with articles showing their faith and order; and none should be "recognized" as Baptist churches that refuse or omit to adopt such articles.

P. S. To my courteous brother who as "Enquirer" addresses me through the paper, I would respectfully say that his questions are not germane to the present stage of my discussion. When, if ever, I reach the topic of the ministry, I shall have to consider the points suggested by him and many others besides. In the connection which furnished occasion for his questions, I was simply proposing for his acceptance the important distinction between baptism and God's truth. The former, while as a symbol it teaches important truths to those who witness it, works no efficacy in the subject of it towards salvation—the latter is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. The former furnishes unto the believer merely the means and the form of making public profession of religion—the latter, under the divine blessing and through the operations of the Holy Spirit, produces conviction, conversion and sanctification. Baptism is restricted to the church and minister; where they exist and are accessible, nobody else may authorize and administer it—God's word is free and untrammelled. He that hears it may communicate it and pass it on without fear of encroaching on the province of others, or in any other way doing an unlawful act. Between baptism and the convert, God has planted the church and the administrator. He must apply to them and gain their concurrence and consent before he can receive the ordinance. But he need ask nobody's permission to receive and appropriate it. God has, it is true, made the

church "the pillar and ground of the truth," and has commanded the ministers to preach the Gospel to every creature; but that is to hold out God's word and exhibit it—to place the truth between themselves and the sinner, not to place themselves between the sinner and the truth. Baptism is an official act performed by an officer on the joint authority of himself and the church—but, thank God there is no official truth and no official salvation, as Romanists erroneously teach and presumptuously claim. It remains to be seen whether these views agree with the Scriptural doctrine of the Ministry.

N. B. Brethren who address me through the paper and expect me to notice them, are respectfully requested to sign their proper names to their communications.

#### CHURCH POLITY—HOUSES OF WORSHIP—DEDICATIONS—CHURCH ORDINANCES—BAPTISM.

On Houses of Worship the New Testament gives no information either direct or implied. Under the Old Testament dispensation, the Temple at Jerusalem constituted the central feature—all things else clustered around it. Here alone dwelt God's shekina; at this place alone did the High Priest make atonement for individual and national sins; at this place alone could the offerings of the people be made; and here all the males were required to come at least three times a year. The Old Testament prescriptions said "that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jno. iv : 20. And if prevented by duress or difficulty from being there in the body, men always worshipped with their faces turned if not their windows opened, (Dan. vi : 10.) towards Jerusalem. Under that physical, typical, ritualistic dispensation, the Jews as worshippers could not dispense with Jerusalem and its temple. Deprived of them, their polity becomes an impossibility. Away from them, the wonder is that they do not hang their harps on the willows; for how can they in a strange, or any other, land sing the songs of Zion when no Zion exists? In the physical, symbolical and ritualistic dispensation, the house of worship is the most conspicuous and indispensable object. But the Gospel dispensation is one not physical and ritualistic but spiritual; and the hour has come when neither in the mountain of Samaria nor yet at Jerusalem will men

worship the Father. The hour now is when the true worshippers shall worship Him not in forms and ceremonies and set places, but everywhere, in spirit and in truth. *Jno. iv: 23.* The New Testament says not one word about Houses of Worship. True, it tells us about the apostles entering into "an upper room" in which "abode" many of the disciples named; it tells us that they were in a "house" on the day of Pentecost, and intimates that the room in the house occupied must have been a large one, for "the multitude came together" into it, *Ac. 2: 2, 6*; and, after Pentecost, that they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and that they engaged in breaking bread "from house to house;" but the New Testament gives us no patterns for houses of worship; presents no example of the primitive Christians building such houses; nor does it give the slightest intimation that such a structure is necessary for the completeness of the Gospel polity. That the disciples used houses, either hired or gratuitously tendered, we know, and that houses are a very great convenience we admit; but it is evident that they do not enter into the essence of church existence or polity. An organization may be complete in all the essentials necessary to constitute it a church, and have no place of meeting but a bush-arbor, the shade of a tree, or a cave of the earth. Of course, everybody of the kind, if able, will have for itself a house; but the kind will be left to be decided by taste, by convenience, and by pecuniary ability. It is not to be built, like the tabernacle, after a pattern divinely given.

It is to be regretted though that sometimes the house of worship is so destitute of comfort and taste, and that in other instances it ministers so much to pride and worldliness; and that in others still it is so unsuited for the preaching of the Gospel. It must be confessed that in some parts of our country—notably in the west—in the matter of church edifices, the Romanists have converted the Baptists rather than the contrary. The houses, sping the Papias, are constructed not as audience rooms, but as places for scenic exhibitions. The voice of the speaker, instead of falling in articulate and instructive accents upon the ears of an appreciative audience, rises among the "groined arches" inarticulately

and emptily, as if crying impotently and pitifully to Heaven for help. Houses of worship are not absolutely necessary, but if we have them, let them be such as are suitable as means to the end—and that end the worship of God and the proclamation of the truth.

#### DEDICATIONS.

Is it proper by ceremonies to dedicate a house of worship? In my opinion, there is no Scriptural propriety in it—I can not see how the custom grows logically out of Gospel polity. Sometimes though, I am sorry to say, when a magnificent edifice is constructed, or even a framed house of some pretension is put up, it happens that a resolution, is entered into to "dedicate" it; and some brother of prominence is pitched upon to conduct the ceremonies to that end. I have never heard though of a poor church attempting to dedicate its unpretentious log house or bush-arbor, or even the shadow of a spreading tree, where it worships God, though inconveniently, just as acceptably and profitably as that body which occupies the "gothic temple." The distinguished brother who is invited comes and performs the work—"What work?" I confess, I do not know. Yes; I know he preaches, perhaps, with very great ability, and gives direction also to the other parts of the worship, which consist in praying, and reading, and singing. I know this, it is true; but I do not know what he has done to the house. So far as I can see, that remains precisely as it was before he came. The ritualistic denominations profess to "consecrate" as well as dedicate. As by their processes the Romanists think they make the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper the very body and blood of Christ, so by their ceremonies of consecration they profess to impart to the materials of their church edifices qualities they never had before. Every particle of matter now has become sacred; and the materials thus consecrated are never to be sold, or in any other way subjected to the danger of desecration. But what qualities does our Baptist dedicator impart to the house? Does he make any or all of it sacred? After he has done the work, whatever it may be, will it be a desecration for any part of the building to be put to any other

use? Does he make any part of the house sacred? Some of our speakers and writers sometimes use the word, "sacred desk," as synonymous with "pulpit." Now it is a pity that any of our houses of worship have such a thing as a "desk." Perhaps I ought to beg pardon for it, but I cannot help from saying what a pity it is that any of our brethren should need desks at all! If they were preachers, as many of them are so able to be, and not readers, such an article of furniture as a "desk" would be in the way. But admitting that desks are rightly in our houses of worship, why are the pulpits any more sacred than the pews, or the floor, or the walls, or anything about the house, or in the house, or under the house? And if it is to be admitted that any parts, or all the parts, of the house are sacred, did the dedication ceremonies make them so? Unless we are ritualists, we must admit and maintain, that the ceremonies of dedication have no effect upon the house, as a house; impart no qualities natural or spiritual to the materials of which it may be composed. Why then imitate the ritualistic denominations in that which to us is nothing but an empty ceremony; but which serves to confound us in public conception with those whose superstition we protest against? There is nothing sacred about a house of worship excepting the association; and that is not imparted to it by ceremonies of dedication.

#### CHURCH ORDINANCES—BAPTISM.

I have already, in previous articles, said all that I desire to advance in this connection concerning Baptism. Those who desire to see something more in detail on this subject from my pen are respectfully referred to the book I published on it. In the next article will be found all that I propose to say on the subject of the Lord's Supper.

#### CHURCH POLITY—THE LORD'S SUPPER—POINTS OF AGREEMENT AND OF DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN BAPTISTS AND ALL OTHER IMPORTANT DENOMINATIONS ON THE SUBJECT.

It may help us to form Scriptural opinions on the subject of communion if we place side by side opposing sentiments about it. The bare comparison may furnish an adequate refutation of the erroneous doctrine; or, if not, it will at least show to what points argu-

ments need to be addressed. And perhaps one of the most effective ways of justifying the Baptist practice of restricted communion, is by showing that it springs necessarily out of the principles we hold on the subject, in common with all the important denominations. The attention of the reader, then, is asked to the following brief outline of a discussion of the character indicated. Taking up disagreements first:

#### 1. *The points of dissimilarity between other denominations and Baptists.*

To be impersonal as much as possible, let the other denominations be divided by the broadest generalization, and be treated of as ritualistic and non-ritualistic, i. e., as on the one hand, those who lay chief stress on ritualism, and, on the other, as those who emphasize experimental religion.

First. Ritualistic denominations differ with us in their opinions,

#### 1. *As to the significance of the ordinance.*

They make it an "opus operatum"—as that which in itself possesses essential efficiency. Papists hold to "transubstantiation." Viz., that the elements are the very body and blood of Christ. They avowedly, therefore, worship the "host," and offer it for the adoration of the people. In their opinion, those who partake of the elements, eat the very body and drink the very blood of Christ.

High-church Episcopalians hold, with Luther, to "consubstantiation"—viz., that, in a mystical sense, Christ's "real presence" always attends the "consecrated elements." They show, as well as the Papists, reverence and adoration, but explain that it is not to the elements, but to the real presence of Christ which always accompanies them, when consecrated. One of their representative writers—"Our New Vicar"—Rev. J. B. Monzell L.L. D., England, uses such language as this:

"The holy communion is the gravest and most important subject on which we can muse." "So awful is it that I deprecate all discussion, and would rather wonder, meditate and adore, than attempt to explain my own feelings about the mystery." p. 53.

"To celebrate the holy eucharist, is the highest act of spiritual worship and adoration which man can render to God." p. 55. "Without it we cannot live." "The rea-

presence of the body and blood of Christ is there." p. 65. "Baptism is God's ordinance for imparting the new life, just as the Lord's Supper is His ordinance for renewing it. p. 106.

According to ritualists, then, it is by the "Holy Communion" that men eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man. John vi. The logical consequence of this then is, that all infants and others who die without partaking of the Lord's Supper are lost; for Christ says (John vi : 53), "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye have no life in you." And all, it matters not what their character and conduct, who partake of the Supper, will be certainly saved, for Christ says, "Who so eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." v. 54.

On the contrary, Baptists hold,

1. That the ordinance is designed as a remembrancer of Christ,

(a) In fact that it is a symbol by which a church in its aggregate capacity, and assembled together, may preach Christ. In silence and by symbol, it preaches to the peoples' eyes the great gospel truth—Christ's body was broken and His blood was shed for atonement for sin.

God has two ways of communicating to the people the doctrine of Christ crucified—one, by the vocal utterances of the minister as he addresses himself to their ears—the other, by His ordinances that, by impressive silence, express in symbol the same great truth to their eyes. There are but two gospel ordinances—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. And the primary object of each is to exhibit in symbol the same great truth of a crucified Saviour that the heralds of salvation proclaim in oral language. Whenever one who puts on Christ in baptism, goes down into the water in the presence of the people, on the one hand, he exhibits to the eye the great gospel truths: Christ died for sin; He was buried; He rose again; He ever liveth—and on the other, he professes in the same way a fellowship in Christ's sufferings; an interest in His death; and experience of the blessings of divine grace bestowed, according to the covenant of redemption, by the Persons of the adorable Trinity; and a resolution, God helping him,

to consecrate the remainder of his life to God's service. The language of his act, interpreted by inspiration, is, "I am buried with Christ by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so I also should walk in newness of life." Rom. vi : 34.

Baptism is no "opus operatum"—of itself, it works no efficient result on the subject of it in the way of salvation. None but those already saved have any right to be baptized. True, it is an act of obedience; it furnishes the opportunity and the way of publicly "putting on Christ;" and it is "the answer of a good conscience;" but an important significance and use of it is to preach in symbol to the eye the doctrine of the Cross. And how often has God graciously blessed it in the conviction, and conversion, and sanctification of precious souls!

The ordinance, which is the subject of the present essay, is designed to subserv the same purpose. Once for all, every individual who puts on Christ by baptism, preaches, in symbol, the doctrine of the Cross: frequently, and at stated times, in its organized capacity, and assembled together, impressively, by the same method, exhibits the same great truths: Christ's body was broken and His blood was shed for sin. "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi : 26.

There is nothing ritualistic or superstitious in this. It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe: and it is His pleasure to make both kinds of preaching—the symbolical addressed to the eye, as well as the oral addressed to the ear—the power of God unto salvation. Rites and ceremonies have no efficacy to salvation excepting as they furnish the occasions or the means to communicate to the heart, through the understanding, gospel truths which are able to make those who receive them wise unto everlasting life. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature—and faith which worketh by love." Gal. vi : 15 and 5 : 6.

According to the Baptist view, then, one important object to the subserved by the Lord's Supper is, that by it churches may in symbol preach the doctrine of the Cross.

*Remark 1.* If this be so, how unreasonable and inconsistent is it for the pastor to dismiss the congregation before proceeding to administer the Lord's Supper. And how much greater the inconsistency when arts are employed to procure and hasten the dispersion of the people. A preacher postponing the delivery of his discourse, until the people have all retired and left him to himself! We may have no hesitation to say that those who pursue this course—however sound may be their views in other respects—fail to realize that God intended for the church by this ordinance to preach in symbol the doctrine of the Cross.

*Remark 2.* With this understanding of the ordinance, how reprehensible would it be to give the bread and wine to one confined in a sick room—to one who by reason of physical infirmity is unable to join with the church in the public congregation. An application for the ordinance in this way is dictated by ignorance of its significance and use, or by a lurking ritualistic idea that somehow or other in itself it will work saving efficacy. If a minister, contrary to his convictions, yields to an application of the kind, he is guilty of weakness, and of reprehensible conduct, calling for the severest censures of his church. If he goes through the ceremony conscientiously and by conviction, he is in principle a Romanist, not a Baptist. He would no more thoroughly violate our principles should he proceed to administer even "Extreme Unction" to his subjects.

Nor would the case be much relieved if the church, or the majority of it, meet in the sick room for the purpose of administering the ordinance. The symbolical preacher would in that case be preaching to himself alone and the whole process would be ministering to superstition, and encouraging the afflicted brother to believe that the ordinance is an "opus operatum" to him—that in some way it will, in itself, effectuate his salvation.

That the ordinance is designed as a remembrancer of Christ is shown :

(b) In the fact that it furnishes occasion for those who partake, to prepare themselves for it by meditation and self-examination; and thus to refresh their minds about Christ, and their own great obligations to him. The

preacher applies to his own heart the doctrine which he exhibits to others. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." 2 Cor. xi: 28.

Baptists hold again :

2. That the ordinance is designed to teach not only the atonement but also that other great truth, viz., that spiritual nourishment, growth and vigor are obtained by an appropriation of Christ by faith. John vi. As the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine symbolize the former, so eating the bread and drinking the wine symbolize the latter. It is representing to the eye what every communicant trusts he has in heart already experienced—viz., that spiritual life, its continuance, and all the elements of its efficiency are derived from Christ; and the whole significance of his act in partaking of the Lord's Supper in this aspect of it, might find proper expression in the words of Paul giving his own experience, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii: 20.

Baptists believe again,

3. That the ordinance incidentally reminds the people continually of the second coming of Christ: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi: 26.

2. Ritualistic denominations differ with us again as to the effects they profess to produce by ceremony upon the elements. Certain forms are gone through which they say are effective to "consecrate" the bread and wine. After this, so sacred do the elements become, that they must be sedulously guarded against all risk of desecration. If any remain after the communicants have all partaken, the "priest" or "clergyman" must require the people to repeat the act with him, so far as to secure the thorough consumption of them all. The wine remaining must not be poured back into the unconsecrated mass from which it had been separated; and no crumb of bread must run the risk of appropriation by man, or brute or insect, not entitled to its use.

On the contrary, we do not profess: (a) To

change the elements in any way. They are still bread and wine—any sort of bread, leavened or unleavened; and any sort of wine that is “the juice of the grape.” We make no attempt to “consecrate” the elements—we do not even profess to “bless” them. In the the only way in which we can imitate the Saviour’s example as to this, we simply “give thanks.” “The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks He brake it.” (1 Cor. xi : 23-25.)

(b.) We not only do not profess to change the elements in any way ourselves—we do not even ask God to do so. We wish them to remain bread and wine. If they were anything else but literal bread and wine they would be unsuitable for Christ’s purpose, and for ours, as symbols. According to our principles, any one of our ministers utters nonsense who prays God to “set apart the elements from a common to a special use.” We do such setting apart ourselves.

(c.) We feel that we are guilty of no desecration should we pour back the surplus wine into the vessel from which it was taken; and throw the unused bread to the doge.

Let this suffice as a statement of the points of difference between the Baptists and the Ritualistic denominations. We proceed to show :

*Second.* The points of dissimilarity between us and the non-ritualistic denominations.

They differ from us chiefly in the fact that they consider the Lord’s Supper a test of Christian fellowship. This is shown :

(a.) In the fact that they sometimes discipline their members by excluding them from the table.

(b.) In the fact again that they construe our refusal to commune with them as a declaration on our part of a want of Christian fellowship. True, they as well as we, make a distinction between church fellowship and Christian fellowship; for they have Christian fellowship for many a converted person who has not as yet been baptized and joined a church; and whom them do not invite to their communion table. But not doubting that they are themselves proper church members, and noticing not infrequently that individuals are debarred from the table because they have

lost the Christian fellowship of their brethren, they naturally and candidly jump to the conclusion that we refuse to commune with them because we lack confidence in them as Christians.

On the contrary, we deny that the Lord’s Supper was designed to show Christian fellowship, because it is

(a.) A conscientious man could never commune with a stranger, nor even with an acquaintance whom he did not thoroughly know and approve. If the ordinance is designed to show personal Christian fellowship how could the members of a church as large as Spurgeon’s ever conscientiously commune?

(b.) The Scriptures say, we commune to show, not fellowship, but the Lord’s death. (1 Cor. xi : 26.)

(c.) Least of all, is it a means of showing *dis-fellowship*. With a brother who has transgressed against us we are to deal not by refusing to commune with him, but by taking the steps prescribed in Matthew xviii. And we are to show our disapprobation to those in disorder not by refusing to commune with them, but by arraigning them before the church.

(d.) Of course, fellowship is implied; but it is a technical church fellowship. The organization essaying to commune must be a scriptural gospel church; and the individuals in it must have obtained membership according to the terms of the gospel—viz., by profession of justifying faith in Christ; by baptism; and by a vote of the church. If the church is of the scriptural faith and order, and all the members have been admitted in accordance with these scripturally required forms, a communicant may approach the Lord’s table spread by such an organization, because it is a gospel church authorized to spread it, and he, a lawful member authorized to partake at it. He need not wait until he can thoroughly know and approve every member of it; nor need he be embarrassed though he has serious reasons to fear that some who may commune with him have but a name to live while they are dead. There is a technical church fellowship among all the members, that remains intact until disrupted and annulled by the discipline of the church. This fellowship is always implied when a church celebrates

the Lord's Supper. Besides this there is none other, unless it be that expressed in 1 John. i : 3, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Most if not all the denominations, it is believed, differ with us in the posture assumed by the communicants, and the manner of imparting the elements :

1. The Ritualistic kneel at "the altar."
2. Non-ritualistic sit at tables.

In the former case, official "priests" impart the elements : in the latter, officers not claiming to be priests or even preachers hand them around.

Baptists believe that all literal earthly "altars" were done away when Christ made his one complete offering for sin. They have no such places, therefore, in their houses of worship at which communicants can kneel. In their opinion, it is a harmless thing to sit at tables, but they deem it unnecessary to do so. The locality in the house of worship occupied by the communicant, and the posture of the body, if decent and reverent, they consider to be merely unimportant circumstances, that do not enter into the essence of the ordinance. With them, the people, therefore, retain their seats in the pews, while the pastor delivers to ordained deacons the elements to be by them handed around. This too is a mere matter of convenience. The office of deacon was not instituted for this purpose; and it is competent for the elements to be handed around by any other members of the church appointed by adequate authority.

In the opinion of Baptists, nothing enters into the essence of the ordinance but the "bread" "broken" and "eaten" and the "wine" poured out and "drank." If bread were absent—if potatoes or any other edible were substituted for it—if water colored or otherwise, or the juice of the blackberry, were substituted for wine, "the fruit of the vine"—if the elements were smelled or dealt with in any other way than by eating the bread and drinking the wine, it might be an impressive ceremony; but it would be will worship and not the Lord's Supper. The duty of the communicants is to *eat bread and drink wine*; and when they have done these they have gone through all the essentials. With the church and congregation present,

the ordinance may be observed in a house, or under the open canopy of heaven; in the day time or at night; in a lower or an upper chamber; sitting or kneeling, or reclining on the elbow as the ancients did at their meals. All these are more circumstances; and if valid objection may be raised against any of them, it is simply on the ground of the tendency of such things to degenerate into ritualism.

Thus, as briefly as possible, have been given the points of dissimilarity on this subject between Baptists and other denominations. But little needs be said on

*II. The points of resemblance between us and them.*

1. All ritualists believe with us that baptism is a prerequisite to communion.
2. In like manner, all non-ritualistic, *who believe in a converted church-membership*, hold with us that baptism is a prerequisite to communion.

In this connection, the only difference between us and the rest of the so-called Christian world is found in the answer to the question, "What is baptism?" There is not one of the denominations that would invite to commune with them those who, *in their opinion*, have not been baptized. Convince them that immersion is not a valid form of baptism, and there is not one of them that would invite or receive a Baptist to their communion table. Our hardship then is that we are condemned and denounced by other professing Christians for conscientiously and faithfully carrying out the very principles which we hold in common with themselves!

Finally, summing up the whole case according to Baptist principles, and presenting in one view all the terms employed in the present discussion, the argument is simple and brief, as follows:

There can be no scriptural communion excepting as performed by a local gospel church; there can be no local gospel church excepting as composed of individual members; there can be no individual members excepting as they are received on a vote of the local church; none are eligible to be voted for as church members excepting such as have been baptized on a profession of their



faith in Christ; nothing is scriptural baptism but immersion upon a profession of faith in Christ; therefore, there can be no scriptural communion which has not been preceded by that ordinance, scriptural immersion.

Our principles shut us up to the conclusion, which we have no way honestly to escape, that none are qualified to partake of the Lord's Supper excepting those who have been immersed upon a profession of justifying faith in Christ, and been received into the membership of local gospel churches.

#### CHURCH POLITY—THE CHURCH—ITS FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

There is a sense in which a disciple of Christ is a freeman, responsible to no human being. No man nor body of men has a right to dictate to him on matters of conscience, to prescribe to him what he is to believe, and in what way he is to worship God. To his own Master he stands or falls. This freedom though must be exercised in entire consistency with the right and safety of those under the protection of the State, otherwise it becomes a licentiousness to be curbed, and not a liberty to be respected. Should some religionists affect to worship God by crimes, as e.g. by human sacrifices; or by vices, as the Mormons do, the State is in duty bound to interpose, not to interfere with the freedom of opinion and worship, but to prevent crimes that endanger individual safety, and to suppress vices that endanger public morals, and destroy public decency. As, in the State, religious liberty may not be violated, though the laws take cognizance of all actions, so, in the church, it may exist in entire consistency with the fact that those who exercise it are subjects of government—a government, too, claiming jurisdiction of their opinions as well as of their actions. Wherein the exercise of his freedom, in one aspect of it, and in obedience to divine command, in another—a disciple voluntarily unites himself with one of Christ's churches, by that very act he intentionally places himself under a government which, by delegated authority, is to be administered by human agents. Nor is that freedom abdicated by this voluntary subjection. In joining a church the believer does not give up the right of private judgment in matters of religion, he only unites himself with those whose opinions and prac-

tices coincide with his, and who, like himself, are free in matters of this kind. If a church deals with one whose expressed opinions are objectionable, and finally excommunicates him after all efforts have failed to reclaim him to the right opinions, this is not to meddle with the freedom of his conscience, but only in meekness to assert the principles that two cannot walk together except they be agreed; and to leave the excluded one to exercise his convictions in other connections, or in no connections, if he can find no one to join with him in belief. The church follows him with no pains and penalties, or otherwise attempts to punish him as a heretic. If for crimes, or vices, or faults, the church withdraws fellowship from him, it does so not with the intention to inflict punishment on him, but, on the one hand, to show to the world that it is no longer responsible for him, and on the other, to testify to him the greatness of his offense, with the intention and the hope to bring him to repentance.

Christ's Church is an organized body, placed under a code of laws, and every member of it is a subject of government. There is somewhere lodged the power to administer this government. Where is that? Under what form of government in Christ's Church placed? Do the Scriptures make it a despotism; or an aristocracy; or a democracy? Does prelacy, under the name of Pope, Patriarch, or Bishop bear lawful sway? Does an aristocracy, composed of the select few, wield the power? Or are the people authorized to govern themselves under the laws of Christ? The advocates severally of all three of these forms maintain that they have Scriptural sanction. There is a fourth class which is rather of an anomalous character. Where a "State" claims pre-eminence over a "church" with which it is in "union," the government is mongrel, partly secular and partly prelatical, as in the case of the "Church of England"—or partly aristocratic, as in the case of the "State Church" of Scotland. Papacy, which is a pure prelatical despotism, in theory claims that "the Church" has supremacy over the State, and the Pope supremacy over the sovereign. In England the sovereign is the head of "the Church," and the latter is governed in part according to acts of parliament.

Which form of church government has divine sanction? The New Testament gives no formal precept, and enters into no avowed discussion on this subject. But this is a matter of no importance. Apostolic example, under divine guidance, is as authoritative, perspicuous and binding, as apostolic utterances guided by divine inspiration. If we cannot find that the apostles said anything on the subject of the form of church government, it will suffice for our purposes if we can discover what the apostles did in forming churches, and directing their governmental processes.

We have already seen that the primitive churches were local assemblies, not an organization extending over the world, or over States or provinces. An investigation further will show also, that the apostles organized local assemblies that were purely spiritual bodies, having no organic connection with the State; and ruled not, by a monarch in the shape of prelacy, nor by an aristocracy in the shape of a presbytery, but by the people themselves. A Gospel church is a pure democracy, in which every member has a right to participate in the government. This is shown,

1. In the fact that the Saviour conferred on the church the right to decide ultimately between two members irreconcilably at variance. In Matthew xviii, He says to the aggrieved member, in the event that his own efforts with the offender had failed, and the interposition of the one or two whom he had taken with him had been unsuccessful: "Tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican." Not one word said here about the pastor or other officers—no allusion made to any agency or power outside of the church. To that body alone He gives the prerogative and the power to deal with all cases of personal difficulty that ultimately call for discipline.

2. Paul admits that in public offences the church alone has jurisdiction and power. The exclusion of the incestuous person at Corinth, I. Cor. v: 3-5-13, though at his own instance, was the act of the assembled church. The restoration of that person also on repentance, Paul admitted, was in the power of the church; and, at his instance, that body readmitted him

to fellowship and the other privileges of the church.

3. In I. Cor. vi: 4, 5, Paul clearly intimates that a church was competent to decide all legal questions as between its members. While the rebukes them for going to law before heathen magistrates, he virtually asserts that it has the power and resources to pronounce righteous judgment among its own members.

4. The officers of a church were not appointed by outside authority, but elected by the members themselves. This all will admit to be true in the case of the seven deacons appointed at Jerusalem. "Wherefore, brethren," said the apostles, "look out among you seven men, etc., whom we may appoint over this business." "And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose" the seven "whom they set before the apostles." The record is not so plain in regard to the way of appointing the pastor; but by parity of reason we may infer, that the pastor also was chosen by popular suffrage, nor does it militate against this that Titus was left in Crete to ordain elders in every city, Titus i: 1; and that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church. Acts xiv: 23. The statement that these ministers ordained them, proves nothing as to the manner of their selection. The apostles "appointed," or ordained, with the imposition of hands, the seven deacons; but it was not until the brethren, i. e., the church, had "chosen" and "set them before the apostles." Acts vi: 1-6.

5. Business was transacted by a body called the church, or the brethren, or the multitude, together with the elders, and not by the elders by themselves. We have already seen that all the members vote in reference to the baptism of candidates, and their reception into church-membership; and that they have jurisdiction over all questions of discipline. It belongs to the members not only to admit into the communion, and to excommunicate, but also, by parity of reason, to dismiss with full fellowship those whose convenience or duty would impel them to join another church. When Matthias was to be selected to supply the place of Judas, it was the assembled brethren who acted. Acts i: 15-26. When the question concerning circumcision was sent from Antioch to Jerusalem, it was "the brethren" who

appointed the messengers, Acts xv:12; and when that question was settled, Acts xv:i-22, the apostles neither alone, nor in conjunction with the elders exclusively, pronounced the decision. "Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch;" and the letters borne by them commenced in these words: "The apostles and elders, and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia."

6. On some occasions even messengers that were to accompany the apostles on special missions, were appointed by the church I. Cor. xvi:3; II. Cor. viii:19-23.

It is evident that the government resides in the church itself, and not in its officers, or in any extra body.

Objections. But it may be objected that the Scriptures seem to prescribe to the minister the prerogative and the power to rule—as, *e. g.*—"Remember them which have the rule over you—obey them that have the rule over you—salute all them that have the rule over you." Heb. xiii:7-17-24; and that controverted passage, "Let the elders that rule well," etc. I. Tim. viii:17. How are these passages consistent with the proposition that the power to rule is in the church? If the church rules, how can it properly be exhorted, "Obey them that have the rule over you?" The answer is, the original word here translated rulers, or those ruling over you, signifies rather those holding a foremost position, or of leadership in a church. The official designations of the persons in question convey not so much the idea of authority and power, as of pre-eminence and influence. Let the elders that rule well"—*i. e.*—Let those elders that stand before, who are chief men, presiding officers, etc. "Remember them which have the rule over you," *i. e.*, those who are your leaders. "And he gave some pastors or teachers." Ep. iv:11. *i. e.*, shepherds, and teachers. Elders refers to persons aged, or charged with responsibilities suited to a person of mature age. These terms show that a bishop held the chief place in a church which he served, that he was *ex-officio* its presiding officer, that he was to be highly esteemed in love

for his work's sake, that his opinions had great weight with those who decided questions, and that he was the executive officer who announced and carried into effect the decisions of the church; but they do not show that he had a right to lord it over God's heritage, nor do they militate with the proposition that all church power is lodged in the church itself.

#### THE CHARACTER AND EXTENT OF THIS POWER.

The church has inherently no power; all that it lawfully exercises has been delegated to it by Christ. The Master reserves to Himself all legislative power. He alone is the Law-giver in Zion. But He has given to His Churches the right and the duty to interpret and to execute His laws. He has given to the Church delegated sovereignty over its members. With judicial authority it can arraign and try all its members charged with a violation of Christ's law; and with executive authority it can expel all those who have been convicted of such infractions of law as deserve the extreme penalty. That a church has a right to arraign and try disorderly members is shown

1. By the facts already cited—*viz.* That it can adjudicate between its members at variance, and authoritatively and finally decide between them. Matt. xviii; and because, under the sanction of Paul, the church at Corinth first excluded, and afterwards restored, the incestuous person. Shown again

2. Because Christ commends some for enforcing discipline, and condemns others for failing to do so.

(a.) In the Revelations He commends one church for enforcing it. To the church at Ephesus He commands John to write, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitane, which I also hate." Rev. ii:2-6.

(b.) He condemns other churches for not enforcing discipline. To the church at Pergamos He says, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught

Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repeat, or else I will come to thee quickly," etc. Rev. ii:14-16. To the church at Thyatira He says, "Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to track and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." Rev. ii:20.

Christ has invested the local church with a sovereignty over its members which no earthly power has a right to interfere with, and for the exercise of which it is responsible to Him. It has the right, and is in duty bound, to govern its members—but only under the laws of Christ.

#### CHURCH POLITY—CHURCH OFFICERS.

There are two, and but two classes of officers in gospel churches—pastors and deacons. Each of these has its own department of operation—the former taking care of the spiritual, and the latter managing the secular interests of the churches.

As in everything else pertaining to Christ's kingdom, there is a difference of opinion in the so-called Christian world on the subject of church officers also. Some taking "the church" to be a national or universal organization, maintain that there are various gradations among its spiritual officers—from popes or patriarchs, or arch-bishops down to "the inferior clergy." Others hold that there is but one grade of ministers, now called by one title and then by another, as shades of temporary or permanent relations might be expressed; but that elder or bishop, or pastor or evangelist, may be used interchangeably for the same person. Some put the deacon among the spiritual officers, making him of the lowest grade of the teachers; others make him altogether a secular officer.

In discussing this subject it is proposed to inquire,

*First.* Are there really two and only two classes of officers in a gospel church?

*Second.* Are there any gradations among those constituting each class?

*Third.* What relations do the two classes of officers bear to a church, and what are the powers possessed by each?

*First.* That there are two and only two classes of officers that Christ designed to be permanent in His churches is argued:

1. From the fact that, under divine guidance, the apostles, in conjunction with the brethren, "appointed seven men to serve tables" for the church at Jerusalem, at the same time that they formally and avowedly reserved to themselves that part of the operation which pertained "to prayer and the ministry of the word." Acts vi. For I shall take it for granted that these seven were technically deacons, though not called so formally in terms, and that in this transaction the deaconship originated. The apostles, in the formative state of the first church, occupied temporarily the place and performed the work of the spiritual officers; subsequently, elders were ordained in every church.

That two and only two classes of officers belong permanently to the churches is argued again because,

2. Paul, (I Timothy iii,) gives minute statements of the qualifications for all the officers of a church, and these he divides into bishops and deacons. Some maintain that he describes the qualification of deaconesses also, in that part in which they say our translators mistakenly suppose he is giving the qualifications of deacons' wives. This, if granted, would not establish a third class of officers; for it would be only admitting that in those times there were *female* deacons also.

3. In his address to the Philippians, (i: 1,) Paul virtually professes to include the whole church and all its officers—by inference, he teaches that as a whole, they are exhaustively presented as people, or saints, and bishops and deacons: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."

*Question.* But how does this consist with the notorious fact that Stephen and Philip were preachers also? Does not this prove that the deacons were in a sense spiritual and teaching officers also? To this it is replied,

1. The apostles, in appointing Stephen and Philip with five others, did it with the avowed intention to make them secular officers, as distinguished from those who preached the Gospel. "It is not reason," said they, "that we should have the word of God, and serve tables, wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men, etc., whom we may appoint over this business." If Stephen and Philip were already preachers, why was it not permitted to them to refuse—why did they not also say with the apostles, "we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word?" Whatever may have been true afterwards, it is evident that at the time of their selection to the deaconship, these two honored and distinguished men were not known and formally recognized as preachers of the Gospel.

2. The seven wise men of good report and full of the Holy Ghost, whom the brethren in the church at Jerusalem chose from among themselves, were of those, no doubt, who stood most prominently before the people because of their character and good works; and hence, public attention was directed to them. They evinced in the highest degree a zeal in the service of Christ, and an interest in all those things that pertained to the prosperity of the church, and the progress of the cause. They were of that class out of which would grow naturally the ministers of the Gospel. Authorized to tell all they knew about Christ's Gospel, and ready for every good word and work; in the habit of talking about salvation in social intercourse, and of leading in prayer and exhortation in the less formal gatherings of the church; their hearts burning with zeal for Christ and with love for souls; the transition from a zealous Christian to a professed preacher was natural and almost imperceptible. The same thing is true in what we consider the modern Gospel churches. A very large portion, certainly as many as two-sevenths of those who are now Baptist ministers, were once Baptist deacons. When they became ministers they ceased to be deacons. Precisely so, no doubt, it was true of Stephen and Philip.

3. A conclusive argument to show that the deacons, as such, are not preachers, is

found in the fact that Paul, (I. Timothy, iii,) does not give as a qualification "apt to teach."

*Second.* Are there any gradations among these constituting each class?

1. I do not know that any class of religionists make a distinction among the deacons of a "church." Whether they call them teaching or merely business officers, they consider them to be of the same grade. Philip and Stephen, though they subsequently became distinguished as teaching officers, while they remained deacons, did not rank Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas. Acts vi: 5. Though some are older and more experienced, and wiser than others, all the deacons of a church are of the same official rank.

2. Of the teaching officers, Paul has given us a complete list in Ephesians iv: 11, "and He (Christ) gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." The first two, apostles and prophets, all ought to admit, were temporary officers, necessary indeed in the incipient stages of church organization, and for the purpose of setting up church polity under Divine direction, but, after the completion of the canon of Revelation by their inspired agency, no longer necessary to the churches or to the world. While we have the sure word of prophecy by which we are made perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, we need nothing more than that that word should be faithfully interpreted to us by ourselves, or by a competent teacher. In the absence of all need for him, the office and the work of a prophet have passed away. And how can one be a successor of an apostle, when it was the province of the latter to testify to the resurrection of Christ on the ground that he had himself seen Him, I. Cor. ix: 1, and when it was true that an apostle should be endowed with miraculous powers? I. Cor. ix: 1.

There remain, therefore, as permanent ministers, only evangelists, and pastors and teachers—or pastors or teachers; for the construction of the sentence, both in Greek and English, shows that these words refer to the same officer: Evangelists are not properly church officers. These are, and were,

not settled pastors, but itinerant preachers of the Gospel; though responsible to the churches of which they were members. Philip, called in Acts *xxi*: 8 and *vii*: 5-40, "the evangelist," went from place to place disseminating the Gospel. Timothy, also, assisting the apostle, engaged in various places preaching the Word, and establishing the faith of newly-formed churches, was employed in "the work of an evangelist." II. Tim. *iv*: 5.

There is but one permanent class of spiritual officers belonging to Gospel churches. This class are called pastors, or bishops, or elders. That these terms denote the same person is proved by the fact that the Scriptures use them interchangeably. The word, bishop, occurs in the New Testament five times, and in every instance evidently as synonymous with elder. (1). "From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and called the *elders* of the church." *Ac. xx*: 17. These, in his speech, he addressed in the following words: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, (bishops), to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." *V. 28*. By the use of the term "flock" Paul suggests the idea of "pastor," and he virtually testifies that all the "elders" of Ephesus were "bishops." (2). As already quoted, Paul addresses the Philippians, *i*: 1, as "saints," and "bishops" and "deacons." Now, we know that elders were ordained in every church. Here, they are called bishops. (3). To Titus, *i*: 5, etc. Paul says, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, etc. For a *bishop* must be blameless," etc. In this case, it is evident, the two words are used interchangeably. (4). In I. Tim. *iii*. Paul gives the qualifications of all the officers of the church—viz: bishop and deacon. Now we know that there were elders in every church. Here also "bishop" stands for "elder." (5). In the fifth instance in which the word "bishop" is used it refers to Jesus Christ, and, therefore, has but an inferential and illustrative bearing on this discussion: "For ye were as sheep going

astray; but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls." I. Pet. *ii*: 25. The passage in I. Pet. *v*: 1, 2, also throws light on this inquiry, and corroborates the argument. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who are also an elder, etc. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof," etc.—acting the part of a bishop towards them.

Question 1. But it may be asked, does not the New Testament assert that there are two classes of officers called elders—viz: teaching and ruling? "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." I. Tim. *v*: 17. This passage does not distinguish between classes of officers, but between officers of the same class. The word rendered "labor," signifies labor to exhaustion. Honor, of course, is to be given to all elders that rule; but "double honor" only to those who rule well—especially, if to this efficient influence promotive of order is to be added diligent labor in word and doctrine, a labor to exhaustion. The same Greek word is found in Rom. *xvi*: 6. "Greet Mary who bestowed much labor on us;" and in I. Cor. *xv*: 10. "But I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." This passage, then, does not militate against the proposition that elders, and bishops, and pastors were the same.

Question 2. Upon the principle that these words all stood for the same officer, what explanation can be given of the fact that there was a plurality of elders in the primitive churches? It would seem that there can be no controversy about this fact. The church at Philippi, *i*: 1, contained more bishops than one. Paul sent for the elders at Ephesus: and from the terms used, it is evident that they were not a few. *Ac. xx*: 28. Titus was left in Crete that he might ordain elders in every city; and Paul and Barnabas went through Asia Minor ordaining elders in every church. *Ac. xiv*: 23. How is a plurality of elders in the primitive churches consistent with the doctrine that elder and pastor refer to the same man, and that Paul in I. Tim. *iii*, seems to teach that every church must have one bishop, but a plurality

of deacons? The answer is very easy. In those times, the churches had no houses of worship; and the membership was so numerous that no house could contain them all. At Jerusalem we know that on the day of Pentecost there were at least three thousand church members; and in the revival during the protracted meeting which followed, the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Chrysostom informs us that at one time the church at Antioch contained not less than one hundred thousand members. In modern times, where large numbers of Baptists exist in populous cities, the general—almost the universal—rule is to divide up into different churches, each having its own pastor and deacons, and all united together only by church comity and Christian union. In some few cases, single churches have numbered members by the thousands. These have adopted the methods of the early churches, and have elected a plurality of elders to the associated pastoral office. In primitive times, elders were ordained in every church (1) because there was never more than one church in one place; (2) because the numbers in some churches were very great, necessitating the meeting in various congregations in the several wards or districts of the locality—for no audience room could conveniently contain multiplied thousands of hearers; and (3) many would be needed as evangelists, or missionaries to the population contiguous not yet brought under the influences of the Gospel. These last needed ordination and church sanction that they might not only be able to preach, but competent also to aid converts to make profession of religion by baptism.

The grace of God in those miraculous times, and the opposition from without, did much to prevent conflict and collision among the "men of like passions," who constituted the joint and equal elders in every church; but no doubt those men of God found that there was no small amount of human nature within themselves, ready to show itself in emulations, jealousies and strifes, which demanded watchfulness and prayer. Indeed, Paul in sadness foretold to the Ephesian elders that this unsanctified human nature

would show itself disastrously among themselves: "For I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." Ac. xx: 29, 30.

To meet the exigencies of primitive operations, elders were ordained in every church; but in I. Tim. iii, Paul impliedly teaches that every church needs one pastor, or bishop, or elder, as its spiritual officer, and as many deacons as are adequate to attend to its secular affairs.

While the words elder, bishop, and pastor may be used interchangeably to refer to the spiritual officer of a church, shades of differences may be noticed between them. *Elder* is of Jewish origin, and is expressive of official respect rather than of special office. Every ordained minister is an elder, whether he stands in any official relation to a church or not. Peter who was an apostle claimed to be an *elder* also. *Bishop*, derived from Greek origin, and *pastor*, with the idea of flock, imply special charge—viz: that the one called by these titles is the spiritual overseer or guide of the church. Every bishop or pastor is an elder, but not every elder is pastor or bishop. Some are simply evangelists, having no charge of churches. These, while they are elders, would be improperly termed pastors or bishops. None but those having special charge of churches can be described by all the titles—elder, pastor, bishop.

#### CHURCH POLITY—THE OFFICERS (continued.)

*Third.* What relations do the two classes of officers bear to a church, and what are the powers possessed by each? The answer to this, in general terms, is that the pastor has control chiefly of the spiritualities, and the deacons, of the temporalities. In going into detail in giving the answer, it will be convenient to consider each class by itself.

1. What relation does the pastor bear to a church, and what powers does he possess?

It has already been shown that he is the chief man in a church, the head of the organization. If this be so, he must in a sense exercise efficiency in all other things also a

well as in the teaching department. But what does this amount to? What power is lodged in his hand? It will help us in this investigation, if we consider his relations to it.

*First*, As the church is a deliberative body, wielding power itself, whose chief business it is to act, and

*Second*, As a company of disciples whose chief province it is to receive—to acquire instruction, and culture, and training, and capacity to enjoy God and to glorify Him.

*First*. What are the relations of the church, and what the powers, of the pastor when that body is assembled together as a Conference?

And this again can be considered in two aspects: 1. As when the church is conducting a mere business meeting; and

2. As it is engaged in governmental processes.

1. When the church is conducting a mere business meeting, the pastor is *ex-officio* the presiding officer. It is his place to take no other part in the business than to preserve order, to entertain and put questions that are moved in order, and to announce the results of votes. If he makes motions from the chair, or suggests such as should be made, excepting those pertaining to order—if, with or without leaving the chair, he makes speeches for or against pending measures, he is guilty of usurpation, and of folly also; because he is only crippling the true power which God intends that he shall wield. In this connection, the pastor is a mere presiding officer, having the power alone that pertains to that position. And this of itself is no mean power.

2. When a church is engaged in governmental processes it bears no analogy to a legislative body. For purposes of government, it has no right to enact laws. Christ is the sole law-giver: and He has already furnished a complete code. When assembled together in this relation it is (1) a judicial body—*i. e.*—a court to interpret the laws of Christ, and to try those of its members charged with infraction of such laws; and (2) an executive body, competent to carry out its own decisions arrived at in its capacity as a court. In the case of a business meeting, the pastor

was simply a presiding officer who occupied "The Chair;" here, while the church is adjudicating, he bears analogy to one occupying "The Bench," and, when it is executing its decisions, to the executive who announces and carries into effect such decisions.

It may help us in our inquiry as to what are the relations and the powers of the pastor when a church is engaged in judicial processes, if we trace the analogy between him and judges over human courts. Now, while the judge controls—*i. e.*, has supervision over all things that are done, there are many things he cannot do himself. He is prohibited from acting as a prosecuting officer. He cannot indict and arraign a criminal. It is not his province to collect and array testimony. He would be guilty of an outrage if he were to express in open court his opinion of the guilt or innocence of the prisoner. It is the province of the jury to decide questions of that sort. The judge is in duty bound to sit as an impartial umpire between the State and one arraigned on criminal charge; and between citizens who have joined issue on civil questions, holding the scales of justice even. Just so, when the church is sitting as a court, must the pastor refrain from jurisdictions and responsibilities that do not belong to him. Should he arraign members for offenses and prosecute them to conviction or acquittal; should he publicly or privately divulge an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of one accused, or as to who is in the wrong in the case of two brethren at variance—should he presume to act not only as judge, but as prosecuting officer and jury also, he would be concentrating all power in his hands, and acting the despot and the pope. But this attempt to grasp all power will always be abortive. The one guilty of the folly would very soon lose even the power that legitimately belongs to his office. When the church is sitting as a court, the pastor is to take no part as prosecutor in a case; and express and intimate no opinion on facts, but impartially to hold the scales in even balance.

But it may be asked: Is this not making the pastor a mere cypher? I answer: No; It is making him a power rather. Is the



judge a cypher because he has to recognize the rights of prosecuting officers, advocates and juries? On the contrary, he has the power to make all those officers conduct themselves according to the laws and precedents—it is his right and duty to see that cases are brought in according to prescribed forms, and conducted to the end in violation of no principle. He gives to the jury the law bearing upon each case, and decides all legal points raised; and his decision stands unquestioned unless there is an appellate tribunal competent to overrule it. So, the pastor has the power to see that all cases come into the church according to the principles of the Gospel, and; that the church have all the Gospel instructions that in principle are applicable to the case. While he has no right to express any opinion as to the facts, or to intimate anything as to the guilt or innocence—as to the right or wrong of parties, it is his right, and he is in duty bound, to give the church information as to the great principles that pertain to the case.

The fact is, that the pastor's position is one not of authority, but of influence; and he has virtually no other power than moral power. "Rule," Heb. 13, is ascribed to him, but it is the rule chiefly of a presiding officer—of a leader—of an influential man—of one who has the hearts and has gained the confidence of the people. This influence originates:

(a) In the fact that the pastor occupies an influential office, that of itself commands respect. The pastorate is of God's ordination, and the man who fills it, if a true minister, is specially called of God to preach; if a true pastor, is by the Holy Ghost made special overseer over this flock. Acts 20-28. Appointed by God to a God-ordained office, he is entitled to and commands respect. Until something is manifested in his character or occurs in his conduct to break this spell, he always receives from the brethren of his church the highest consideration.

(b) With all his infirmities and faults, the true Christian man, called of God to preach and specially appointed by the Holy Ghost as the overseer of the flock, is a man whose personal character is worthy of respect, and commands it. In personal piety and intelligence, as well as in other things, he is to be at the

head of his people, or else he is out of his place, as one not a true minister of Jesus Christ and a competent pastor. Personal character always passes for what it is worth among honest and Christian people, and a pious, discreet and able pastor will always and of necessity wield a first-class influence among his people.

(c) The services he renders them, and the interest he manifests in their welfare, will always take their hearts—the hearts of the honest and the pious. We can never forget or think with indifference of those who spoke to us words which, under the Divine blessing, caused our awakening; and other words which led us to Christ—whose ministry comforted us in trial, enlightened us in darkness, and strengthened us in weakness. We can never feel indifferent to those who showed special interest in us, though in age and social position we may not have been equal to them—who visited us at our homes, formed intimate personal relations with us, and gave evidence that they esteemed and loved us. The men of God who show that they care for our souls and bodies—that are interested in our welfare for time and eternity—can never be objects of indifference to us. Their opinions and their wishes will be always influential, and generally decisive. Genuine ministers, like their Master, feel that their true mission is not to be ministered, but to minister. Hence, in their very weakness is their greatest power. The people under their charge will certainly esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake.

(d) The exhibition of intellectual power in the pulpit and in other connections in the church precinct, tends to command respect and secure confidence, and, therefore, to give the pastor moral power. Nor need ministers be surprised, and complain that their influence has waned, when they fail to study to show themselves approved unto God as workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. The minister who ceases to be a student, whatever his other virtues, will certainly fail to retain for any length of time the respect of an intelligent people.

So much would I say in regard to the pastor's legitimate power in the government of

the church. In "the chair" and on "the bench" his power is great and effective only while he scrupulously recognizes and respects the power of the church. It is greatest still when he loses sight of it entirely, and with self-abnegation devotes himself to his people's welfare. Then, if in intellectual, moral and social character he is what he ought to be, his influence will be potent and well nigh unquestioned. And this is as it ought to be; for while in a special sense the teaching department of the church is confided to the pastor, all other departments are brought under his jurisdiction, and entitled to his care and influence. The pulpit can never be what it ought to be unless the church in its judicial and executive aspects is administered in harmony with it. While God has given to the pastor special jurisdiction over the pulpit, has made him *ex officio*—the occupant of the chair and of the bench also; while He has

commissioned him specially to preach the Gospel, he has given him a leading part also in the governmental processes of the church.

Note. I regret to say necessity compels me to lay my pen aside. A press of unexpected engagements demands all my attention. So far from completing the discussion of the general theme, I am compelled to stop mid-way in the treatment of one of the special topics under it. It will be seen that I have not shown in detail the relations that the pastor bears to the pulpit; and given no special discussion of the deaconship.

I hope that in the providence of God I may be able hereafter to resume this work—which has been to me a labor of love—and carry it on to completion according to my original plan. In the mean time I return my thanks to those readers who have patiently followed me thus far.

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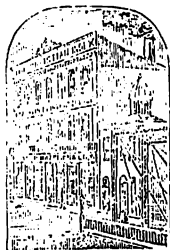
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