



GENERAL ASSEMBLY.—The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America commenced its annual meeting on Thursday last, 10th of May, at eleven o'clock, A. M., in the Seventh Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia. The Sessions were opened by a sermon from the Rev. R. J. Breckinridge, D. D., the Moderator of the last Assembly, from 2d Thessalonians i. 12.

ANNUAL SERMON ON FOREIGN MISSIONS.—The Annual Sermon before the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, will be preached by the Rev. William D. Snodgrass, D. D., in the Second Presbyterian Church, (Rev. Dr. Cuyler's,) Seventh, above Market street, Philadelphia, on To-morrow (Sabbath), evening, 22d inst., at a quarter before eight o'clock.

BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.—The Fifth Annual Meeting of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church commenced on Tuesday last, 17th instant, in the Lecture Room of the Second Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, (Rev. Dr. Cuyler's.) The Rev. Dr. Miller, of Princeton, the President of the Board, in the chair; the Rev. Dr. Krebs, of New York, Recording Secretary. The minutes of the last meeting were read by the Rev. John C. Lowrie, Assistant Secretary. The Annual Report was read by Walter Lowrie, Esq., Corresponding Secretary, which contained pleasing evidence of the healthful activity of Presbyterian Missions.

It is for the utterance of such a sentiment as this, that the editor of the Record is to be unchurched, and sent upon the broad world without even a certificate of character as "an orthodox Presbyterian." He says that it is "the truth that makes the Church," but Episcopacy says it is the "administration and not the truth!" Now without bringing our character for orthodoxy into suspicion, we hope we may be permitted to say, that truth has more to do in constituting the Church than any form of administration. Truth makes the Church, a form of administration may make a Church, or give it its denominational distinction. We recognize all as members of the true Church of Jesus Christ, who embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, and those who deny them membership, do it at their peril. While we believe the form of administration adopted by Presbyterians, to be incomparably superior, as well as more scriptural, than that which is the boast of Episcopacy, yet we recognize the membership of all in that communion who love and practise the truth as it is in Jesus. They are safe if they have the truth, in despite of the human inventions which have been grafted on their form of administration.

TIME OF DIVINE SERVICE.—The time of meeting for public worship in the churches in Philadelphia, is as follows: morning, ten o'clock; afternoon, half-past three o'clock; evening, quarter before eight o'clock.

RIGHT OF ELDERS.—We direct attention to an article in our paper of to-day, on the recently litigated question of the right of Ruling Elders to impose hands in ordination. Nothing that we have seen or heard has in the slightest degree shaken our confidence in the opinion before expressed, that Ruling Elders have no right to participate in the ordination service of a preaching Elder. We are sorry to see this novelty introduced which may possibly cause much distraction to the Church. The article of our correspondent is written with a full understanding of the question.

LICENTIATES.—The Editor of the Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church, says, in allusion to an article which appeared in the Presbyterian, in relation to probationers for the Gospel ministry, that the limited licensure of candidates for a year has been the practice of that Church, "and has been found, by long experience, to be a wise regulation."

We have another article on the same subject, in our paper of to-day, from another esteemed correspondent. He objects to our opinion that the licensure should be limited to a single year. The grounds of our opinion are that in most cases the licensure might with great facility be renewed if thought necessary at the end of the year—that the short period for which it was granted would tend greatly to stimulate licentiates in their labours—and that when licentiates are sent to a distance from the Presbytery which has licensed them, they should be invariably dismissed to put themselves under the care of the Presbyteries within the bounds of which they propose to labour. On the subject, however, we have no favourite opinion, except as to the principle that the licensure should be limited.

TRACTARIAN POLICY.—The London Record, a paper conducted with excellent spirit, and evangelical in its character, has rendered itself obnoxious to the Oxford heretics and their coadjutors in this country, by its able and efficient resistance to the monstrous sentiments of the Oxford Tractarians. It has pursued its course with perseverance and fearlessness, and its influence has no doubt been widely felt. Denunciation has recently been resorted to, to affect its reputation with Episcopals. It professes to be devoted to the interests of the Established Church of England, but its enemies now pretend to have discovered that its editor is a Scotch Presbyterian, and of course that all its arguments against the semi-popery of Oxford are thereby vitiated. Were it proved that he was a Presbyterian, we cannot see how that could affect the character of his arguments against Oxfordism, however it might bring his honesty into suspicion. The supposition we consider altogether improbable, because— First, "Although Oxford divines may be used

to the point, pretending to be one thing and actually being its very opposite, yet it is not the way with Presbyterians, who are apt to stand boldly under their own denominational colours. Second, it would be the most thing imaginable for a Presbyterian, who was deserving of the name, to edit a paper, which for the most part favoured Episcopacy, with the hope of being able now and then to oppose high churchmen, by arguments derived from the brightest luminaries of that Church. Third, the truth of the statement is denied by the editor, and is not proved by his opponents.

We have been amused to see the eagerness with which this conjectural discovery has been reiterated by the press in this country, sympathizing with the Oxford Tracts. That an Episcopal paper should venture to affirm that a man might belong to the true Church of Christ, and yet not believe in the divine right of diocesan Episcopacy, was truly alarming, but the mystery is unravelled, and Episcopacy wonderfully relieved, by conjecturally attributing this latitudinarian sentiment to a Presbyterian disguised in Episcopal robes! We commend the device, and suggest that when ever a sound sentiment is uttered in the established Church, its author should be forthwith denounced as a Presbyterian in disguise.

This whole matter is ably reviewed by the Episcopal Recorder of Philadelphia, and it conclusively shows that if the editor of the Record is to be cast aside as a Presbyterian, for the utterance of liberal sentiments on Church order, certain prelates of no small fame must share the same fate. The Church Chronicle of New Haven, takes the opposite side, from which we quote a single passage. It is as follows:

"The editor of the Record, upon his own responsibility, takes a position that is point blank opposed to the articles of the Church, when he says that 'it is the truth that makes the Church, and not any form of administration,' that 'where the truth is, there is the Church, whatever may be its discipline.' So say the transcendentalists, and those who reject every form of organization. But this is not Church doctrine. Nay, it is not even orthodox Presbyterianism."

It is for the utterance of such a sentiment as this, that the editor of the Record is to be unchurched, and sent upon the broad world without even a certificate of character as "an orthodox Presbyterian." He says that it is "the truth that makes the Church," but Episcopacy says it is the "administration and not the truth!" Now without bringing our character for orthodoxy into suspicion, we hope we may be permitted to say, that truth has more to do in constituting the Church than any form of administration. Truth makes the Church, a form of administration may make a Church, or give it its denominational distinction. We recognize all as members of the true Church of Jesus Christ, who embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, and those who deny them membership, do it at their peril. While we believe the form of administration adopted by Presbyterians, to be incomparably superior, as well as more scriptural, than that which is the boast of Episcopacy, yet we recognize the membership of all in that communion who love and practise the truth as it is in Jesus. They are safe if they have the truth, in despite of the human inventions which have been grafted on their form of administration.

Another sentiment expressed by the Record, on the authority of Bishop Hall, which is offensive to the Chronicle, is "that there is no difference in any essential matter between the Church of England and her sisters of the Reformation." All we have to say to this, we refer to the Church of England if the opinion of Bishop Hall be not well founded. Essentially to differ from the faith of the Reformation would be tantamount to being out of the way of salvation.

CHURCH EXTENSION.—A doubt has been suggested by one of our contemporaries in relation to the views of Church extension, which we formally expressed, whether the spirit, if excited, would really prove a blessing or not? The doubt must relate to the possible bad feeling with which such an enterprise might be conducted, and not to the enterprise itself. It will be admitted that sectarianism may influence an individual whose heart is never warmed by the love of God, and who is never urged to duty by a regard to the divine glory. We need not say, that such a spirit is irreligious; however it may be engaged in religious things, and although it may be overruled for good, it has no promise of a blessing. There is however a very different spirit which is the union of piety with sectarianism, in its good sense, which is nothing more or less than strong attachment to the truth as far as it has been revealed to us. Sectarianism is a term which has undeservedly fallen into disrepute. If truth be loved and defended at all, it must be in some particular form; there is no such thing as loving it in general or abstractly, and hence what is usually termed liberality in religion in contradistinction from sectarianism, is a very undefined notion of religion mingled with no small share of indifference. Religion is embraced with a cordiality proportioned to the clearness of view with which it is apprehended, and a difference in view leads to denominational distinctions. Now we may suppose a man from conviction becomes a Presbyterian; the truth as embraced under that denominational name has commended itself to his judgment and conscience as agreeable to the word of God; he is to be branded as a bigot for expressing his preference, and displaying it in active efforts to spread this form of truth as widely as possible? Surely not. As a Presbyterian, he is not under any obligation to deery other denominations; he should not feel envious at their prosperity; nay, he should wish them God speed, as far as their belief is in accordance with the divine word; but nevertheless, he should be unceasingly active in promoting that peculiarity of doctrine, worship, and government which he verily believes to be most scriptural. Thus an intelligent Presbyterian will manifest his consistency in encouraging Presbyterian institutions; the ministers he will assist in multiplying, the seminaries of learning he will encourage, the churches he will build will be Presbyterian in

his name and spirit. As we have said before, this can be done with perfect charity for others, and that it should be done we have no doubt.

BE COURTIOUS.—This simple scriptural precept, if carried out generally into practice, would greatly increase the amount of human happiness, which does not so much consist in great things as it is compounded of little things. Wealth, high station, political distinction, and things of a similar nature, have no power, as the history of the world shows, to tranquillize the feelings, and inspire the soul with hope; nay, the possessor of them all may be utterly wretched. On the contrary, happiness may be resident where these are all absent. A sincere friend, an obedient child, an affectionate husband or wife, are incomparably more potent in promoting the true enjoyment of life. In accordance with this general principle, we find much unhappiness in the world which is the result of mere unkindness. A man might endure the pain of a broken limb with more fortitude than an unkind remark from a supposed friend; a blow would in many cases be less difficult to bear than a contemptuous look or word. How many are chagrined, and have their happiness destroyed for days together, by the incivility or supercilious treatment of others! Feuds arise, the most irreconcilable alienations occur from causes thus apparently trivial; whereas on the contrary, love may be perpetuated, friendship won, and the comfort of all around promoted, by a kind, friendly, and courteous behaviour. Be kind to all, show a friendly regard for their welfare, never speak ill of them, address them courteously, and you will not only gain their good will, but you will be a benefactor by exciting in their minds some feelings which will increase their enjoyment. Why should not all aim at this? May it not be mutually advantageous? Will not the courteous be courteously treated? And is there not a reason for this, in a world where at the best our share of happiness is small, which cannot afford foolishly to throw away? The example of the blessed Jesus who smiled benignantly on the unworthy, who showed an interest in their welfare, who spoke kindly, and acted benevolently, should be all powerful with his followers.

VALUABLE WORK.—Isaac Ashmead & Co., Philadelphia, have just published in one royal octavo volume of 532 pages, the text of the New Testament with Scott's Practical Observations, with an Introduction, by the Rev. Dr. Alexander, of Princeton. The volume is printed in double columns, on good paper, and is illustrated by a number of engravings. The character of Dr. Scott's Commentary is well known, and his practical observations appended to each chapter have been particularly esteemed by Christians. They are rich, spiritual, and edifying. The whole commentary, although excellent, does not gain access to every family on account of its size, but this portion of it, being portable, and cheap, is likely to have many purchasers. We cannot recommend it too strongly, as an aid to family worship. Wherever the family altar is erected, the sacred text in connexion with these observations may be read with great profit, and we would advise all families to introduce this book into their social worship, and have it read in course. We hope the publishers will have encouragement to publish the Old Testament in a similar manner.

LANE SEMINARY.—A letter from Dr. Beecher, published in the Connecticut Congregational Observer, contains a strong appeal for Lane Seminary. We quote a paragraph: "Our Seminary has already helped into the ministry between eighty and ninety young men; with few exceptions they settle at the West—in feeble churches—on small salaries, work hard, and have revivals, and are soon surrounded by large churches, and blessed with a competent support, and act as missionaries to organize and multiply new churches around them. Our endowments and professorships, buildings, library and lands, surpass any other Seminary but Andover, and want only students to supply the West with ministers, and eighty dollars per year to cover the whole expense of each beneficiary. Thus aided, we might send out a stream of sixty or seventy ministers a year, which would soon decide the evangelical character and glorious destiny of the West."

FROM OUR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT. Religious State of France.—No. IX. March 1, 1842. In my last, I spoke of some of the charitable institutions that have been undertaken in France, as the happy fruits of the beginning of a religious revival among us; and without forgetting more favoured neighbours, we have reason to bless the Lord for the progress that has been made in the course of the last few years. You are perhaps better acquainted with the religious state of France than with its Protestant philanthropic institutions, which are all of comparatively a date. Twenty years ago not one establishment of the sort existed, and now, thanks be to God, we can count many.

ARCHBISHOP LAUD.—The high church Episcopal press is earnest in praising this notorious persecutor, but the Episcopal Recorder, with a more honest estimate of his character, says: "But when we are asked to contemplate Laud as a martyr, and a model for a Christian Bishop, as a finished specimen of ecclesiastical excellence—the view in which the Tractarians present him, every feeling within us revolts at the idea. Such a challenge forces us to point to the gross and glaring crimes which stain his character, and which will, while history lasts, make his memory come up into the nostrils of men with ill savour. Can we ever forget his deliberate solemnization of the marriage of the Earl of Devonshire with the lady Penelope Devereux, thus giving his public sanction both to seduction and adultery? and in reference to which King James, when a mitre was asked for Laud, made the tart reply—'Was there not a certain lady who forsake her husband, and married a Lord that was her paramour? Who knit that knot? Shall I make a man a prelate, one of the angels of my Church, who hath a flagrant crime upon him?' Can we forget that the infamous Courtesan Buckingham, and the wicked Earl of Stratford, each one branded with the deepest signs of licentiousness, were his patrons—his chosen confidential friends and advisers? Can we forget his unwearied efforts to bring about a legalized desecration of the Sabbath? Can we forget his cruel and bloody acts, in the Star Chamber, where his voice was almost law, and where he exerted his whole influence to deliver over to cropping, and salting, to imprisonment and death, Christian men who had no other crime, than that they thought differently upon religious subjects from him? Can we forget the dreadful punishment, which Laud inflicted upon the father of Archbishop Leighton, a Scotch divine, merely for having written a book against prelaty? The unanimous decision of the Star Chamber was, 'that Dr. Leighton should pay a fine of ten thousand pounds; that the high commission should degrade him from his ministry; and that he should be sought to be pilloried in second Westminster, while the court was sitting, and whipped; after whipping be set upon the pillory a convenient time, and have one of his ears cut off, one side of his nose slit, and be branded in the face with a double S. S. for a sower of sedition; that then he should be carried to prison, and after a few days to be pilloried a second time in Chesapeake, and be then likewise whipped, and have the other side of his nose slit, and his other ear cut off, and then be shut up in close prison for the remainder of his life.' Is this the Catholic mode of answering arguments against prelaty? Is the Episcopal Church to be built up by canonizing such men? Out upon such champions for Episcopacy, as would

set up Laud, as a model for a Christian Bishop in what is strong, and beautifully contrasted light does the gentle, meek, and holy Archbishop Leighton appear with this picture, the son of the very man upon whom Laud wreaked his canonical rage! Which is the model for a Christian Bishop, the fierce, ambitious, bloody Laud, or the mild, self-abasing, heavenly, holy Leighton? Which is the glory of the Episcopal Church? The Tractarians canonize Laud, while they disparage Leighton."

LETTERS AND ERASMIUS.—A stronger contrast could not be furnished than that which these two names suggest. Luther was an ardent lover and impetuous defender of the truth; Erasmus was a wily courtier, who in all things studied his own ease and reputation; the one believed the truth heartily, and reposed on it exclusively, being taught by the Holy Ghost; the other, although he was persuaded of the corruptions of the papacy, yet had no proper understanding of the great doctrines of the Reformation, and evinced in his whole life that he had made no saving impression on his heart. His views of the doctrines of grace were erroneous, and while he seemed to admit the doctrine of free salvation, yet in his work on the Freedom of the Will, his arguments all evidently are designed to prove that man himself is the great agent in his own salvation. Luther most triumphantly refuted the time-serving philosopher, and his treatise had such an effect on the usually placid Erasmus, that he lost his temper, and poured forth his feeble invectives. On this D'Abigné remarks: "Erasmus was conquered. Moderation had, till this occasion, been his strength; and now this left him. Anger was the only weapon he could oppose to Luther's energy. The wisdom of the philosopher, on this occasion, failed him. He replied publicly in his Hyperbastes, in which he accuses the Reformer of barbarism, falsehood, and blasphemy. The philosopher ever ventured on the contrary: 'I predict, said he, that no name under heaven will hereafter be more execrated than Luther's.' The Jubilee of 1817, has replied to this prophecy, after a lapse of three centuries, by the enthusiasm and acclamations of the entire Protestant world."

By these various institutions, a large number of children of both sexes are preserved from vice, and taught the fear of the Lord; and may we not hope to see the most happy effects arising from such causes? While the youngest part of the community are thus provided for, establishments of another nature are about being formed. A house of refuge is opened in a faubourg of Paris to receive young women who by their immoral or irregular conduct have lost the esteem and confidence of their fellow citizens; and, in the same house, schools of *charité Protestante*, are preparing to fill up the various places that are opening on every side to receive them. This last institution, which has been founded in Paris by pastor Vermeil, is deeply interesting. The need of it is generally felt; for similar institutions have been founded also in Germany, and lately in Switzerland. Such establishments belong only to a country where the spirit of the Gospel begins to have free course, when Christianity has softened the hearts, and taught those who are under its benign influence, their duty towards their fellow-creatures, whose temporal and spiritual welfare must be essentially connected with the reception of the helpless, for those who wish to turn from their evil ways, are founded, nothing can be more necessary than persons well instructed to govern them.

A few lines from the Prospectus on the subject, shows the spirit in which the founder of the establishment of the *seurs de charité* in Paris, wish to act: "Called to instruct, to counsel, and to exhort, the sisters must be well instructed; their faith must be sure and living; and their piety full of mildness and forbearance. . . . In and near the establishment, the sisters must be assured of the means of instruction and practice, according to their vocation, and their employment. Besides the occupation of an active life, they will follow a regular and permanent course of religious instruction, as well as the studies necessary to become good school-mistresses, or nurses for the sick and infirm. They must be essentially active, and it is only in case of disease or age, after many years of service, that for these handmaids of the Lord repose can be permitted, or possible."

RIGHTS OF RULING ELDERS. Mr. Editor—A question has been started within a year or two, and not a little discussed, especially in some Western Presbyteries, which is, whether the rights of Ruling Elders, in the General Assembly, at any rate, ought to come there and receive some kind of decision, before subordinate judicatories undertake to decide upon it, and act for themselves. I refer to the notion which has been lately, seriously entertained in the Synod of Kentucky, that in the ordination of ministers of the gospel, whether Pastors or Evangelists, Ruling Elders ought to lay on hands with ministers. It has been stated, that two Presbyteries in that Synod have actually adopted this practice; and very recently, the other several years ago. But it has been alleged, that our fathers, in this respect, because I think it has no just foundation in Presbyterian principles; and because, even if it had, the practice ought not to have been adopted by any subordinate judicatory, without employing the Constitutional means of securing uniformity in this matter throughout the whole Church.

That this whole thing is an error, entirely without foundation in Presbyterian principles, appears to me capable of being clearly established. And the longer I reflect upon it, the deeper is my impression of its mischievous influence as well as erroneous character. The first consideration which leads to this conclusion is, that the two offices of Pastor or Bishop, and Ruling Elder are not the same. They are essentially distinct; and, of course, as like beings like, the one cannot take part in the ordination of the other. The office of Pastor is a clerical office, and consequently, may act in imparting it; but we cannot say that the converse of this is the case. The one is appointed both to teach and to rule; the other to rule only; and, of course, when the subordinate clerical lays on hands in the investiture of the higher, it is a sort of ecclesiastical sacrilege. Nor is this incongruity in the least diminished by alleging that the form of ordination Pastors and Ruling Elders may be the same; that is, that both have been, and ought to be ordained by prayer and the imposition of hands. This being so, how can this incongruous notion about Ruling Elders be reconciled with the form of ordination prescribed in our

public standards? There it is directed that each one who lays hands on the head of a minister in ordination, shall take him by the hand, when he rises from his knees, and shall say to him, in these or equivalent words—"We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part of this ministry with us." Can a Ruling Elder lay hands upon either a Pastor or a Minister? Surely not unless he bears the same office with the person whom he thus addresses.

True, indeed, it is said, in our Form of Government, in the chapter on Ordination, that the newly ordained minister, on rising from his knees, shall be taken by the hand, by every member of the Presbytery, with the repetition of the formula above prescribed. But who are members of the Presbytery in the evident sense of our book? No one, Mr. Editor, is less disposed than the writer of these lines to undervalue either the dignity or the importance of the office of Ruling Elder; but suppose you were to ask another, when the Presbytery of Philadelphia was not in Session, who were its members? Would any one think of naming, in reply, any but the ministers who occupied a place on its roll? Are any others, properly speaking, at this hour, members of that body, excepting the ministers of the Presbytery, who come in when the body is in session, and take part in its proceedings, are not permanent or stated members. Each individual of their number becomes the occupant of a seat perhaps once in three or four years; and while each session lasts, the individual is a member; but after that hour he has adjourned. Accordingly in the published tables of our Presbyteries and Synods, who are the persons mentioned as members? The ministers only, as every one knows.—I cannot question, then, that in this strict sense we are to understand the language of the book when it is said that every member of the Presbytery shall take the ordained person by the hand, and acknowledge him as a partaker of a common office. If the word member is to be understood in a plenary and unlimited sense wherever it is used in this chapter, then a Ruling Elder may perform a number of the acts which are spoken of as belonging to members, but which have been hitherto always regarded as confined to the clerical members of the body.

II. Further; the uniform practice of the venerable men who formed the constitution of our church, is a living and indubitable commentary on their language. How did they practically interpret their own meaning? Directly in opposition to the new opinion, and in perfect harmony with the practice which it is the object of this paper to vindicate. The constitution of our church under which we now act was finally completed and ratified in 1788—fifty-four years ago. From that time to the present, how have the venerable men who were concerned in the formation of that Formulary, continued to act in regard to the matter now under discussion? Can a single instance now be produced of any of those men adopting or countenancing the new view? If in the general title of members of the Presbytery who were to lay on hands, we give the "right hand of fellowship," they meant to include Ruling Elders as well as ministers, would they not have acted accordingly? How can we account for it that such a construction was never thought of, either in theory or practice, by the men who formed the constitution, and who, of course, were of all orders most competent to interpret its language? How has it happened that this new doctrine was never stumbled upon, until all those Fathers of the Church, with very few if any exceptions, were sleeping in their graves? Do the advocates of the new doctrine understand the language better than its framers? Or were those framers so weak, or so dishonest as to believe one thing, and practise another?

III. This reasoning will receive abundant confirmation if we examine what has been the practice of ALL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES, without exception, for the last three hundred years. There is a kind of "common law," in ecclesiastical as well as civil communities, equally binding with that which is statutory; and to which, where it is clearly ascertainable, all good citizens implicitly bow, such a common law, it is confidently believed, exists in respect to the matter under consideration. It is believed that in regard to no point of ecclesiastical order has there been more perfect uniformity of practice in Presbyterian Christendom, than in excluding all but ministers from laying on hands in the ordination of ministers. Whether we trace the history of Presbyterianism as it has existed in Scotland, in Geneva, in France, in Holland, in Germany, or in the United States, it is confidently believed that no example of a different kind was ever held of, until within two or three years in the state of Kentucky. It is notorious and admitted that in the Form of Government drawn up by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and adopted by the Church of Scotland, no other than "preaching Presbytery" were allowed to lay on hands in ministerial ordinations. It is well known, too, that *Calvin*, the venerable patriarch and representative of the Church of Geneva, expressly declares that such ordinations are to be laid on by pastors only, (sole pastors.) And we may confidently pronounce that the whole annals of regular Presbyterianism, both foreign and domestic, will be searched in vain for a single instance of a contrary kind. Where has the practice of laying on hands ever been learned? From what source has light suddenly burst forth to sanction a practice never heard of before? Surely those who profess to be Old-school Presbyterians ought to be slow in deserting the "old paths," and adopting plans entirely at variance with all preceding usage.

But it has been alleged, that our fathers of the American Church, in framing our present constitution, designedly departed from the model of Scotland; and instead of saying as our Scotch ancestors have done, that the imposition of hands was to be made by "preaching Presbyteries" alone, have employed language which assigns this rite to every member of the Presbytery. This change of language, say the advocates of the new doctrine, was no doubt, intentional, and must be considered as indicating a design to sanction and introduce a practice different from that of our Scotch fathers. Nothing more is necessary to refute this argument than a recurrence to the fact, that Dr. Witherspoon, for many years an eminent minister, and for some time before he left that country, a distinguished leader of the evangelizing part of the Church of Scotland, was a member of the committee who framed our ecclesiastical constitution, besides a number of other aged ministers who were perfectly familiar with the principles and habits of our mother church. If those enlightened and venerable men really meant to introduce a new practice, why was such a change not only never introduced, but never so much as proposed or heard of for more than half a century afterwards? Were they so stupid as to forget their own purpose, or so dishonest as to say one thing and mean and do another? Yet the fact is, that no one of their number seems ever to have adopted or thought of such a change as they are alleged to have aimed at. How any thinking candid man can imagine that these men, so intelligent and so pure, altered the language of the constitution for the express purpose of introducing the new practice which is contended for, and yet never in any single instance, adopted or proposed that practice, is indeed one of the most marvellous of all imaginations!

IV. I object to the new doctrine and practice which I now oppose, as adapted to introduce confusion and radical error in regard to the office of the Ruling Elder. One of the most zealous advocates of the doctrine in question was heard to say, that he had been twice ordained, once as a Ruling Elder, and afterwards as a Minister of the Gospel; that he considered this as entirely wrong; and that if it were to be again, he should be inclined to consider his first ordination as sufficient, and to refuse any other. Nothing that I have heard advanced in favour of this new system ever did more to satisfy me of its radical error, than this statement. It convinced me that if the new notion were once generally adopted and carried into effect, the Ruling Elder, instead of being a blessing to the church, would be an annoyance and a curse; or rather that it would lead to the destruction of that office, in its scriptural and practical character altogether. Only introduce the principle, that the office of the Pastor and the Ruling Elder is the same; that every Ruling Elder in the land has received an ordination which obviates him with the highest ministerial power; and that in virtue of it, he has a right whenever he pleases, to assume the function of preaching and administering the sacraments,—only adopt this principle and act upon it, and the disorder and mischief likely to ensue would transcend all calculation. The foregoing remarks, on either the ministerial character than the most thorough-going fanatic could propose. And yet the whole of this consequence seems to me legitimately to flow from the doctrine concerning ordination which it is the object of the present paper to refute.

The fact is, if the principle be adopted, that the office of Ruling Elder and Pastor is the same; and, of course, that no new ordination is necessary, when he who has for some time acted in the former office, begins to assume the functions of the latter; then undoubtedly, one of two consequences must ensue, either the character of the Ruling Elder must be so elevated, and such qualifications for the office called for, as would render it difficult, if not impossible for one church in ten to obtain a plurality of Elders; or the function of preaching and administering the sacraments, which are the essential and cheapened as no longer to command the respect or the confidence of intelligent Christians.—Either of these consequences would be deplorable. A man may be acceptable and eminent as a Ruling Elder, according to the prevailing and popular views of that office, who could never command respect, or be really useful as a minister of the Gospel; and it is perfectly evident that the more entirely distinct these offices are kept in fact, and in the popular mind, the more likely will they be to answer the great purposes of their institution.

The foregoing remarks are intended to show that the new doctrine and practice concerning the agency of Elders in ministerial ordination ought not to be adopted! To my mind, they are perfectly conclusive. I think I see the derangement of much Presbyterian principle, and great practical mischief as likely to arise from the general adoption of the new theory.

But this is not all. Suppose the invasion of Presbyterian principles were less dangerous, and the practical mischief likely to ensue less serious—nothing due to the unity and harmony of the Church? We profess to be bound together by the same constitution, and to give a homogeneous body. We consider it as a great advantage, that we all walk together by the same rules, and all speak the same thing; so that a Presbyterian minister or member, in travelling from one Presbytery to another, finds everywhere the same doctrine, and the same practice, and is every where at home in the enjoyment of the same usages. Is it discreet, then, for one or two Presbyteries, or a single Synod to introduce some usage different from the rest of the body, and thus to countenance a diversity of feelings, diversity of practice? Would it not be far more desirable, that we should all be bound together by the same constitution, and give a homogeneous body. 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