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ARTICLE I.

THE SUFFERING SEABOARD OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

Among those who encountered the severe trials induced by the late war, none have experienced greater sufferings than the people who dwell on the seaboard of South Carolina. We propose to make some remarks in reference to the past and present condition of this people. We are led to do this by a desire to chronicle events which are but transiently under the eye of observation—*quæque ipsi miserrima vidimus*—and because we are deeply interested in the welfare of near neighbors, and cannot but profoundly sympathise with them as they walk in the furnace of affliction. We are so constituted as to be more thoroughly moved by actual instances of suffering and want, than by any abstract description of their nature, or by the most vivid portraiture of scenes which practically involve them. However forcible may be the expositions of the obligation to exercise pity, or however touching may be the narratives of remote cases of distress, we are more intensely excited by the spectacle of the object in affliction. The account of a starving fellow-creature may to some extent call forth our sympathy; but it is the sight of the emaciated form, the hollow eye, the sunken features, which stir the deepest emotions of the heart. The presence, in an Athenian court, of the wife and children of a man charged with the commission of a capital offence, more moved the Judges than the

as to his existence. The argument for a First Cause, combined with the teleological argument, is therefore of great value for the establishment of Theism. These arguments prepare the way for an appeal to God himself to settle the question as to the eternity of matter. We believe he has spoken on this point. While, therefore, reason alone gives us God and force, revelation assures us that God creates force. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

ARTICLE V.

THE DEMISSION OF THE MINISTRY.

The subject indicated by this title has been one of great interest in our Church for many years, and cases occur from time to time which make it a subject of very painful interest. It is perfectly notorious that men are ordained to the work of the ministry who discover, in the course of time, that they have mistaken their calling, and in this unwelcome conclusion they have the concurrence of the congregations of God's people and of the Presbytery. They have the same sort of evidence, and the same degree of evidence, that they have not been called of God, as they at first supposed they had that they were called. Some of this unhappy class feel grievously oppressed by their ordination engagements, which they have no ability to meet, and desire to be released, to lay aside the title and privileges of the ministry of the Word, as well as its duties. They plead, and with great plausibility at least, that a Christian man ought to attempt to do no work in which he cannot maintain a good conscience before God and man; that in such a work as that of the gospel ministry, it is impossible to be useful or to enjoy any comfort, if a man's conscience is constantly accusing him of exercising an authority which the Head of the Church has not given him.

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There are a few, perhaps, who enter the ministry from unworthy motives—to obtain a social position they are unable to acquire in any other calling, or to avail themselves of the reputation for good moral character and a high degree of intellectual training which is usually associated with the office of a minister, or even to gain some sordid advantages for which the ministry is supposed to afford an opportunity—whose consciences do not afflict them when they find that their calling is not practically sanctioned by the Church. They readily turn aside to any work which may promise to furnish the means of living or of wealth, and yet are not unwilling to wear the title, share the honors, and exercise the privileges of the *laborers* in the vineyard of the Lord. They constitute a sort of prelates in the Church; exercising, without the consent of the Church, an episcopal jurisdiction along with their brethren of the Presbytery who are faithfully preaching the gospel. If they are charged with neglecting their duty, the answer is ready, that the people are not willing to hear them. How can they preach, without a congregation to hear? The experiment has been tried, and has failed. At the same time, no flagrant offence has been committed, either against the faith or against manners which could justify the use of discipline and deposition from the ministry.

Now, what is to be done with such cases? Deposition for crime, by the terms of the foregoing description, is out of the question. Shall the one class be compelled to endure the tortures of conscience, under the supposition that ordination vows are irrevocable? Shall they be compelled to wear the title of an office whose duties and privileges they have demitted, and that, too, by the consent of the Presbytery? Shall they be forced to keep up a *sham* of this sort? Shall the other class be allowed to dishonor the ministry and the Church, by neglecting the duties of their calling, and by enjoying privileges and rights which properly belong only to those who perform those duties? Is the Church of Jesus Christ the only corporation on earth which has no power to get rid of incompetent officers? Is it indeed true that her Head has made the vow to hold on to the *title* and *office* of a minister irrevocable, while the vow *to do the work* may be

revoked?*

This seems monstrous; and yet it has been recently pronounced by the largest Synod of our Church to be the teaching of our Constitution; and some of its leading members pronounced the decision to be in accordance with the teaching of the Word of God concerning the nature of office in the Church, and the nature and obligations of ordination engagements. The doctrine of the "indelible character," which we had supposed to be the peculiar error of Papists and High Church Episcopalians, seems not to be peculiar to them, but to be held by brethren who profess—and we have not the shadow of a doubt, *sincerely* profess—to abhor the figment of the Priesthood and of the Apostolical Succession.

Let us, then, examine this question: Whether the Church, acting through its proper courts, can divest of his office, without censure, and restore to the condition of a private member, a minister whom it believes, upon good grounds, to have been inducted into office without a divine vocation, and that, too, even when the minister may think himself called?

We have chosen to state the question almost exactly in the words of the Revised Book of Discipline, (c. viii., § 10,) sent

* We may as well say here, once for all, that the New Testament seems to have no knowledge of the broad distinction which is made by some of our brethren in this argument, and which seems to be involved in allowing a man to retain his office and title, when he has ceased to do the work. Of course the distinction must be recognised so far as to allow the faculty or power or *habit* to exist, when it is not in exercise. A minister cannot *always* be preaching, or performing any other ministerial function. The power exists, as the schoolmen say, *in actu primo*, when it is not *in actu secundo*. As Horace has it (Serm. L. i., Sat. 3, vs. 129 et seq.):

“——quamvis tacet Hermogenes, cantor tamen atque
Optimus est modulator; ut Alfenus vafer, omni
Abjecto instrumento artis clausaque taberna,
Sutor erat, . . .”

Hermogenes is a singer, even when he is silent, and Alfenus is a cobbler, even when his shop is shut up. But this is a very different distinction from that which allows a man to be a minister when he expects to minister no more. The New Testament contemplates an office as an *officium*. Paul and Barnabas had hands laid on them for a *work*. (Acts xiii. 2; xiv. 26.)

down by the General Assembly of 1869 to the Presbyteries, and by a majority of them approved, although not adopted. We propose to examine it in the light of the Word of God, of the teaching of the Reformed Church, and of our Constitution. It will be borne in mind that in this discussion the only class of ministers we have reference to are those described in the question as stated. We have no reference to those who have been laid aside from infirmity or ill health, much less to those faithful soldiers of the Lord Jesus who have worn themselves out in his service. Yet we are free to say that if any even of these should profess that their consciences are burdened by the title and office of minister, when they have ceased to do the work, and they could not be persuaded to take a different view of the matter, we should vote for their release. We beg that it may also be borne in mind that we are debating only with those brethren who concede that a minister, like a ruling elder or a deacon, may demit all the duties of the office, and yet deny that he can be divested of the office and the title except by a deposition which implies censure.

As the question of the Church's power to divest a man of his office is to be determined, in the absence of positive statute, by her power to clothe him with office, it will be necessary, in the first place, to inquire what part the Church has, according to the Scriptures, in calling her members into office.

I. She has *some* part in this vocation, and, we may add, the *same* part, in regard to all her *ordinary* officers. Extraordinary officers, no doubt, have been given to her by her Divine Head, as the exigencies of her condition demanded, in whose calling she had no part. Apostles and prophets were of this class. They were commissioned directly and immediately by God himself, and of their qualifications and tenure of office the Church was not constituted a judge. The Levitical priests, though in a certain sense ordinary officers of the Jewish Church, exercised their office altogether independently of the congregation. In another sense, their calling was extraordinary, because it depended upon their birth in a certain tribe and in a certain family of that tribe—a matter which must be supposed to be under the very

special superintendence and providence of God. Besides, as both priests and Levites were officers about the temple, employed in a worship strictly sacrificial, there are no officers corresponding to them under the gospel, and the mode of their calling, therefore, does not concern us as Christians, except so far as it illustrates the calling of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to be the only Priest, and the Priest forever, of his Church, in the proper sense, and the calling of his people to be a royal priesthood, in a figurative sense.* We think it important to remind our readers of this distinction between the ordinary and extraordinary officers of the Church, and between the ordinary and extraordinary calling belonging to them respectively, because the overlooking of this distinction has been the occasion, if not the source, of fanatical error. It does not at all follow, that because a Moses, or an Elijah, or a Jeremiah, or a Jehoiada was frowned upon and disowned by the visible people of God, that a man may exercise the office of a preacher, or a ruler, in opposition to the Church, upon the pretence that he has received a call too potent to be resisted.

Now, as to the *ordinary* officers of the Christian Church, it is clearly the teaching of the New Testament that they are called to office through the action of the Church, and this in two ways—by *election* and by *ordination*. The election is made by the Presbytery and by the congregation or Christian people; the ordina-

* The "sons of the prophets," (1 Sam. xix. 18; 2 Kings ii. 3, 5; iv. 38,) furnish a closer Old Testament analogy. The selection and admission of persons who were suited for the prophetic office by their personal character, and who had a divine call, probably depended on the prophetic judgment of those who presided over these institutions ("the *schools* of the prophets," commonly so called, though the phrase does not occur in the Scriptures). Comp. 1 Tim. i. 18. The prophets, from the time of Samuel, (comp. Acts iii. 24) became, in a certain sense, an *ordinary* office of the Jewish Church, *munus propheticum*; the *donum propheticum* had appeared before in sporadic instances. A still closer analogy is found in the elective elders in Israel (Deut. i. 9-15). The people, it appears from a comparison of this place with Ex. iii. 15, chose these elders under the guidance of Moses, "which directs us," as John Owen suggests, "to the right interpretation of Acts xiv. 23." (True Nature of a Gospel Church, c. iv.)

tion, by the Presbytery or existing rulers of the Church. Thus the original deacons were chosen by the brethren from among themselves, and then ordained by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. (Acts vi.) Then as to the elders: In Acts xiv. 23, Paul and Barnabas, in our Authorised Version, are said to have "ordained" elders in every church. But there are two good reasons for objecting to this rendering. The first is, that the word in the original, though afterwards used in the Greek Church for the ceremony of laying on of hands, had no other sense in the apostolic age than that of choosing by suffrage; for this is manifestly its sense in 2 Cor. viii. 19, the only other passage where it is used in the New Testament. The other reason is, that the ordination is separately mentioned in the last part of the verse as a "commending of them to the Lord on whom they had believed." The meaning of the passage, therefore, seems to be, that elders were appointed by the suffrages of the disciples in every church under the direction of Paul and Barnabas, and then by these last ordained—there being, by the supposition, no existing court to perform the act of ordination. This is the interpretation of Calvin and Turretin among the Reformed theologians, and of Gerhard among the Lutheran. Gerhard (*Loc. Theolog.*, L. xxiv., cap. iii., sec. 4, ¶ 93,) quotes Alfonso Salmeron as defining the Greek verb, by "*per majorem partem suffragiorum eligere*," and then as proceeding to say, "As therefore the apostles committed to the faithful the election and nomination of the seven deacons whom they themselves inducted into office by prayer and imposition of hands, so here Paul and Barnabas gave to the believers the privilege of nominating and electing in each city a bishop, whom they themselves afterwards consecrated by prayer, fasting, and imposition of hands." Pretty well for a Jesuit, and a sufficient answer to the subtleties of his brother Jesuit, Bellarmine. The only difficulty in the way of this interpretation is, that Paul and Barnabas are said to have done the act denoted by the Greek verb; *they* chose the elders. The difficulty is not serious. The apostles no doubt concurred with the people in choosing, and probably led the way by nomination, as is constantly done now in the choice of officers, both by the con-

gregational and classical Presbyteries. All we are contending for is, that the suffrage of the congregation is a *sine qua non* to the appointment of men to the ordinary offices of the Church. And this right of the congregation is so clear that it has been acknowledged in all ages of the Church, even when practically withheld by the tyranny of its rulers; acknowledged, as we have seen, even by Jesuits.*

The right of election grows out of the very nature of the Church and its relation to its offices. The reader may see this point stated and illustrated at some length in the article on Apostolical Succession, in this REVIEW, Vol. XXIII., pp. 380 *et seq.* It is sufficient for the purposes of the present argument, to say that all gifts and grace, all power of every kind, whether of *order* or of *jurisdiction*, exercised by officers in the Church, according to the law of Christ, belong originally and virtually to the Church itself. She is the *principium quod*. The officers who exercise the functions of preaching, ruling, distributing, act in her name, as well as in the name of Christ, her Head. They constitute the *principium quo*. The power of seeing belongs to the human body, but the body sees by the eye.† All gifts, grace, and power come from the hand of Christ, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost; but it belongs to the Church, by the grant of Christ, her Head, to say what persons, possessing these gifts, shall exercise office. "If a man desire the office of a bishop," and feel moved to seek it from a sincere and godly motive, very well; but he cannot consider his call to be authenticated and made out, until the Church approves. If he is called to preach and rule, the Church is called to be preached to and to be ruled; and she is at least as good a judge of the question of *her* calling, as the man is of *his*. Suppose that they differ in judgment. Then, either there is a dead lock in the machinery, or the Church surrenders the liberty wherewith the Saviour has made her free, and becomes the slave of men.

* A collection of testimonies may be found in Calvin's Inst., L. IV., c. 3. Turretin, Loc. xviii., Q. 24, Secs. 14, 15. Gerhard, *ut supra*, Secs 94-97. Owen's True Nature of a Gospel Church, c. iv.

† See Voet. Polit. Ecclesiast., P. I., L. I., Tract. 2, cap. 5.

This view of the relation of the Church to her officers is so obviously the true one, that it is recognised even by writers in the Papal body, although diametrically opposed to the whole doctrine of the priesthood. Take, for instance, the following passage from Tostatus (Bishop of Avila in Spain, and member of the Council of Basle, in 1434): "A community," he says, "since it is not properly a unit, but only *per accidens*, like a heap of stones, cannot exercise some acts; nay, it is impossible that a community should exercise jurisdiction. There is indeed jurisdiction in the community *originally* and *virtually* (*i. e.*, as the schools express it, *in actu primo*, or *quoad esse*,) because all persons to whom jurisdiction is given, receive it by virtue of the community; and they can exercise it, but the community not. . . . The Church received the keys from Christ, and the apostles also received them as ministers of the Church, and now the Church has the keys, and prelates also have them; but the Church in one way, and the prelates in another; for the Church has them *originally* and *virtually*, (*secundum originem et virtutem*.) but the prelates for use and exercise' (*i. e.*, *in actu secundo*, or *quoad operari*).* Truly, well stated; and if Tostatus and the Basle Council could have succeeded in persuading the Pope and his prelates to take this view of the power of the keys, we might never have heard of Luther.

It would seem to follow inevitably from this right of the Church to judge of the qualifications of her officers and to call them into office, that when she becomes satisfied of their present unfitness or of her mistake in ever having judged them to be fit, she may reverse her judgment and revoke her call. Nobody doubts that this may be done in regard to a *probationer* for the ministry, even without reasons given, by a mere resolution of the Presbytery. And if she may not do the same in regard to an ordained minister, with reasons and by a solemn judgment of the Presbytery, it must be because there is something in the nature of the ceremony of ordination, or in its effects, which forbids it. It is necessary, therefore, to inquire what ordination is, and what it does. This is the other branch, as we have stated, of vocation.

* Cited by Turretin, Loc. xviii., Q. 24.

According to the Papists and their followers in the Protestant Church, ordination is the *whole* of vocation. It imparts the office and the charisms necessary for the discharge of its functions. A bishop is a sort of Leyden jar, charged with spiritual electricity, and by the contact of his hands with the head of the candidate, the subtle power is conducted into him, and he becomes a priest. Or, if he is to be made a bishop, it requires three of such jars to charge him with a sufficient amount of power to make a priest and to assist in making other bishops. Nay, worse than this; the bishop claims the awful prerogative which the Lord of glory challenges to himself, of bestowing the Holy Ghost. In their ordinations, at least in the Papal, an "indelible character" is imparted; and a man once made a priest, he can never more become that despised thing they call a "laic." No damnable heresy, or damnable immorality, no murders, no incests, no sodomies, can *delete* the sacred character.

According to the Scriptures, ordination is simply an act by which the Church, acting through the proper officers, "commends" the ordained man "to the Lord for the *work* whereunto he has called" him, or the Church judges he has called him. (Acts xiii. 3; xiv. 26, and verse 23.) This commending of the man to the Lord for the *work*, is done by prayer and the laying on of hands. This is the great mystery of ordination! It imparts no gift, or character, much less one that is indelible. It confers no *title*, except so far as the title may serve to describe or indicate the kind of *work* the man is expected to *do*. The man makes no unconditional promise to do the work so long as he lives; and such a promise would be rash and foolish to the last degree.* He

* The Eleventh Canon of the Discipline of the Reformed Church of France is as follows (Quick's Synodicon, p. 19): "Such as shall be chosen into the ministry of the gospel, must know that they be in that office for term of life, unless they be lawfully discharged upon good and certain considerations, and that by the Provincial Synod." This is the only declaration of the perpetuity of the obligation a man assumes in entering the ministry, that we have been able to find in the Reformed Church; and, with the qualification which accompanies it, it has our hearty assent. It may be further observed, that the canon seems to refer to just such a case as we are considering in this article, the case of one who may be dis-

does not know how long the Lord may want him in that work, or whether he will be permitted long to do any work at all. His voice may fail. His memory may become so weak as to make him incapable of any public performance. All his faculties may insensibly decay, or some mysterious, inscrutable disorder may destroy his self-possession and make him unable to face an audience. In short, he may get into a condition, without any fault of his own, so far as appears, which, if it had existed at the time of his application to the Presbytery, would have prevented his ordination. Does the mystic power of ordination still compel the Church to commend him to the Lord for a work which she knows or believes him utterly incompetent to do? Does it compel the Church to give him still the title, and him to wear it, when, by the consent of the Church, and of his own conscience, he has ceased to do the work? Must Hermogenes be still called a singer, when he has renounced singing, because he has lost the power? Must the subtle Alfenus be still *entitled* a cobbler, when he has not only thrown aside every tool of his trade, and shut up his shop, but has also turned lawyer?

Such seem to be some of the absurdities involved in the mystic view of ordination. The Church once, by the laying on of hands and prayer, publicly professed her belief that God had called a man to a certain work, and her readiness to receive and obey him in the doing of that work; and in this faith commended him to the Lord. Now she is convinced, both in Presbytery and congregation, that she was mistaken; she is sure that he was never called, or that he is no longer called. Nevertheless, she is bound to consider him a minister, and he is bound to consider himself such, at least in name! We admit that there ought to be this difference between a probationer and an ordained minister, that, as the latter has been formally and solemnly recognised as called

charged without censure, upon good and certain grounds. The matter of *deposition* is fully treated in the other canons concerning the ministry. Certain it is, that in our Church a man's ordination engagements (or "vows," as they are called, without warrant,) do not bind him absolutely for life. See these "engagements" in Form of Government, c. xv., sec. 12, and compare for the word "engagements," c. xvi., sec. 6.

of Christ to do a certain work of preaching and ruling in the Church, this act of recognition ought not to be annulled without grave and solid reasons, and these reasons made matter of record along with the judgment of the court; and further, that the right of appeal and complaint to the higher courts ought to be fully allowed and recognised. But we cannot see that ordination entitles him to claim more than this. Where the minister not only consents to be relegated to the status of a private member of the Church, but even requests it, there is no difficulty in the case, if he has the concurrence of the Church in his judgment that he has not been called, or is no longer called, of Christ to the work.

But brethren insist that there must be more in ordination than the little we have admitted. Some, whose minds are inclined to a sort of mystic exaltation all much impressed by phantoms and apparitions which, after their manner, refuse to take shape and form, and by the very absence of definite shape, exercise a power of fascination all the more despotic. These phantoms are sometimes the ghosts of departed entities, and come in a "questionable" shape indeed, but in a very different sense from that in which Hamlet used the word. One of these departed entities is the "indelible character." As the ghost of transubstantiation still haunts the imagination of some intelligent believers when they partake of the Lord's Supper, and the ghost of baptismal regeneration still lingers around the baptismal font, even in some Presbyterian churches, so the ghost of the indelible character occasionally flits before the mind when the ceremony of ordination is performed, even where there is no unction, no delivery of the cup and paten, no blasphemous breathing upon the person ordained, accompanied by the words, "Receive thou the Holy Ghost!" These apparitions defy not only the "cock-crowling of the intellectual morn," but the full blaze of the intellectual noon. We remember to have heard an argument made by one of the clearest-headed men in our Church, in favor of the irrevocable nature of a minister's ordination engagements, characterised by another equally clear-headed as "metaphysical and mystical."

We hope to be excused from arguing against these shadows, which are proof against all weapons of a mortal logic.

But it is said that the notion of an irrevocable vow in ordination finds its analogy in the similar vows of *marriage* and of *church-membership*. Great mistakes occur in both. Conditions of things are revealed in the course of time, which, if they had been known to exist at the time the relation was formed, or could have been foreseen, the relation never would have been constituted or the vows assumed. But the relation has been constituted, the vows have been taken, and there is no remedy. The unfortunate parties may be pitied, but not released.

As to the analogy of marriage, we find it gravely alleged in a solemn deliverance of the Kirk of Scotland.* “Some things there are which may debar a man’s entering into the ministry, and may be reason enough for the Church to shut the door upon him, such as some mistakes and escapes offensive in the life, that may proceed from rashness, weakness, ignorance, or want of prudence; yet when he is once admitted and entered, the like escapes will not be found sufficient to depose and thrust him out; for, *multa impediunt matrimonium contrahendum, quae non dirimunt contractum.*” Upon this analogy it is sufficient to observe, *first*, that it is a poetical or rhetorical, not a rational or logical analogy: *secondly*, that the same analogy was used in the ancient Church, to prove that bishops ought not to be translated from one charge to another; and such a translation was stigmatised as spiritual adultery; † *thirdly*, that the parties married, so long as the *vinculum* remains, are not allowed to demit all the duties of the rela-

* Pardovan’s Collections, Part I., p. 206, Edin., 1837. We have said that this was a “deliverance” of the Kirk of Scotland, but it is contained under Title II., of “Methodised Collections and Observations concerning the Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Kirk of Scotland,” gathered by the collector out of “old and late manuscript and printed Acts of General Assemblies.”

† See Kurtz’s Manual of Church History, § 87. The canon of the Council of Nice on this subject is well known. The Councils of Antioch and Sardica passed similar canons. The necessities, or the good sense of the Church, notwithstanding the moving appeal to the marriage relation, soon made a dead letter of all these canons.

tion, and to retain only the names of husband and wife; and *lastly*, that we have an *express statute of God making the marriage relation permanent until death*. Let a similar statute be produced in regard to the ministry, and there will be at once an end of controversy.

As to the relation of church-membership, the brethren who defend the theory of irrevocable vows are equally unfortunate. For, *first*, that which makes the vows irrevocable in the case of a church-member is, that he was bound before he made the vows at all: bound as a creature of God, who has sinned and has had the offer of salvation made to him freely in the gospel; and bound by his dedication to God in infancy in the ordinance of baptism, if he was then baptized. His vows, then, assumed when he is admitted to the full communion of the Church, only confirm and strengthen obligations which held him before, would have continued to hold him if he had never "joined the Church," and will hold him to the end. Now there is nothing analogous to this in the engagements assumed by a church officer at his ordination. He was not bound to preach, or rule, or "distribute", before he was called to it, or supposed that he was called. It is the call of the Church that creates the obligation, and he is neither bound nor allowed to be a minister, elder, or deacon, until he has it. And the same voice of the Church that created the obligation, may annul it. The Church may err or sin in annulling, as she may also in creating. We are not contending for the abuse of her power, but for the lawful use of it. *Secondly*, that there is no proper analogy between the engagements of a minister, as such, and the vows of a church-member, is the judgment of Christians generally. Nothing but idiocy or insanity will excuse a man, in the judgment of Christians, from the exercise of faith and love. A minister who has no gifts for his calling, is readily excused from attempting to exercise it; and he will be even more honored for giving it up and coming down to the place of a private member of the church. It is not easy to sophisticate the moral sense of Christian people. It is hard to persuade them that it is as wicked to let a drop of the communion wine fall on the floor, as it is to steal, or slander, or murder. Some nominal Chris-

tians there may be, who have been so persuaded, as there are inmates of our penitentiaries who have been put there for cutting people's throats, who are yet too tender of conscience to eat flesh on Fridays; as there were some of old who tithed the mint, anise, and cummin, and yet devoured widows' houses; and as there was one (and he no Pharisee) who, from a tender regard to the sanctity of an oath made to a dancing girl, cut off the head of the greatest of the prophets. Every step we take, as a Church, in the line of supporting *shams*, is a step in the direction of Phariseism and Popery. Let us beware, and not insist on an irrevocable vow to hold on to a title when all that makes the title anything else than a sham, has been laid down and given up forever. No man can lay down his obligation to serve the Lord as a member of the Church. This is the judgment of the whole Church. A man *may* lay down his obligation *to do the work* of a minister; this is the judgment of the whole Church. A man may lay down the title and name which describes the work, as well as the work itself! May this be speedily the judgment of the whole Church!

We have now sufficiently considered, in the light of Scripture, the nature of vocation to office in the Church, so far as it consists in election and ordination. There remains to be considered another element, which must always be taken into the account before a man can be regarded as competent to undertake to fulfil the duties of any ecclesiastical office, and especially that of a minister of the Word. This element is the man's own conscience. "In every act we can perform on earth, we are entitled to expect, before we can be required to perform it, and we are bound to have, before we venture to perform it, the testimony of a good conscience; and the clearness and force of our conscientious convictions should be analogous to the magnitude, the perplexity, the difficulty of the contemplated duty. For a man, then, to presume to be an ambassador for Almighty God, and that touching questions no less awful than the glory of his throne and the endless state of his rebellious subjects, without a settled conviction in his own soul that this fearful trust is laid on him by the King Eternal—is insane audacity. I say not he must be convinced he

ought to be sent—Moses pleaded hard against his mission—the conviction must be that he is sent. I say not he must judge that he is fit to be sent, for no man is fit. I say not that this or the other motive—as many will assert—or any motive at all, beside the simple one of obedience to the voice of the heavenly monitor, should mingle with the inward, fixed conviction; nor that this proof or the other proof—as many will contend—or any proof at all, beside the testimony of consciousness itself, should beget within us this strong assurance that it is God's Spirit which has wrought us for this self-same thing. I say not there may not be doubts and perplexities, trials very sore, and temptations of the adversary—fightings without and fears within, and troubles on every side—for if these things be not, it is either that grace is overwhelmingly abundant, or that Satan judges us to be workmen that he need not fear. Nor do I deny that, like as the kingdom of heaven itself is but as a grain of mustard planted in the broken heart, which must be watered by many a tear, and watched amid long and anxious vigils, as its roots strike down and its branches spread strongly and widely abroad, so this inward testimony of a divine vocation may be a whisper to the soul, almost inaudible in the profoundest stillness of the spirit of man—lost, restored again, strengthened, repeated, struggling amidst the passions that toss us to and fro, and fighting against the sins that would quench it—following us, if need be, as God followed Jonah, till out of the belly of hell the right of the Almighty Disposer is confessed.”*

No man would ever be ordained, we suppose, to ecclesiastical office against his conscience. The “*nolo episcopari*” may be announced with great emphasis and sincerity, but it may be overcome by the voice of the Church. But unless it be overcome, and the man become “willing” at least to accept the office, he ought not to be put into it. Farel and the Church of Geneva had great difficulty in conquering the repugnance of Calvin to the work in that city, and, it would seem, to the work of preaching itself. But the repugnance was overcome, and the conviction

* R. J. Breckinridge's Sermon on The Christian Pastor.

was produced in that great man's conscience, that God had called him. John Knox resisted the importunity of his brethren, and with the like result. Indeed, it is intuitively obvious that, in any office whose power is moral and spiritual, the conscientious convictions of the incumbent are fundamentally important. In a mechanical or magical system of religion like that of Popery, the sacredness of the *office* is the primary consideration. No kind of holiness is indispensable in the priest, except that which belongs to the stones of which the temple is built, or to the bells which announce the hours of worship. A man is still a priest, and his functions are efficacious, though he be wicked enough to mingle poison with the wine which he gives to a guest at his own table, or even with the consecrated wafer which he administers to the communicant. But in the Church of Christ, holiness attaches to persons, not to things; and the power of a man's office will generally correspond with the moral and spiritual condition of the man himself, whether he be preacher, ruling elder, or deacon. Illustrious exceptions to the rule may be alleged, as Chalmers and Thomas Scott; as, in the Old Testament, Balaam is an exception to the rule of "*holy*" prophets, and his dumb ass is an exception to the rule of the ministry of *men* or of *angels*. But the exceptions are rare. Now, what could be more unfriendly to the interests of holiness in a minister of the gospel, than a perpetual war with his conscience? How could anything, short of open and downright heresy and immorality, more effectually cut the nerves of his ministry? No man, therefore, in a church worthy of the name, would ever be required to enter an office, if he conscientiously believed that Christ had not called him into it.

Now, is the case materially different of a man who *once* believed that he was thus called, but is now satisfied that he was mistaken, or that he is no longer called? * Shall we say to him,

* "Quod valet ad legitimum vocando impedimentum adferendum, idem ad vocatum abdicandum valere debet."—Gerhard, *Loc. Theolog.*, L. 24, c. iii., sec. 16, § 175, note. It will be observed that the Lutheran Theologians, in general lean, in matters of this sort, more towards the Papal system, than do those of the Reformed Church. This fact makes the *dictum* quoted more weighty.

that there is now no remedy; that he must either commit some offence which may open an avenue of escape through *deposition*, or remain *in statu quo*; that his vow to retain the *title* is irrevocable, though his conscience may be relieved from the responsibility of the work? The afflicted man replies, that his conscience will not allow him to retain the title when it is an empty show; that he feels like a hypocrite; that he is sailing under false colors; that he cannot endure to receive the honors of a minister which the title and name, to a greater or less extent, procure for him, even against his wishes. He implores the Presbytery to relieve him from the burden of a name. Shall it refuse? Certain it is, that this relief is practically given to a ruling elder and deacon in our Church. They have no "Reverend" to their names, and no D. D., and therefore could not lose the title. It is the misfortune of the preacher that he has a title to lose, and it seems he must not lose it, even if it should prove the shirt of Nessus to him.

But it is said, again, consider how different the call of a preacher is from that of an elder or deacon! We answer, we have considered it, and the only difference we have been able to discover is this: that different gifts are bestowed upon the man who is called to preach—from those which are given to qualify a man merely to rule or to distribute. The conviction of duty as to the call, may also be expected to be stronger in a teaching elder than in an elder who rules only, or in a deacon. But the mode of calling is the same—by the Holy Ghost, through the Church; and our Book evidently treats them all in the same way as to the demission of the active exercise of their offices. (See Form of Government, xiii. 6.) We must either give up the doctrine of the *divine right* of the ruling elder's office, or admit that there is no difference between his call and that of the minister. Then, if an entire demission is practically allowed to the deacon or the ruling elder, why should not the same privilege be conceded to the preacher of the Word? There is no reason why it should not, is the answer, it seems to us, which every man will give who is not frightened or fascinated by the ghost of "the indelible character."

The case, then, would seem to be very plain, so far as it concerns the man who is himself satisfied that he has mistaken his calling. He may be right in this conviction. Who, then, would compel him to retain the office? He may be wrong; and if the Church does not concur with him in his judgment, it is possible that he ought to submit his judgment to that of the Church. But the fact remains: he is convinced that he ought not to preach; the conviction is not a thing of to-day; it has been growing for years, like the contrary conviction so forcibly described by Dr. Breckinridge, at first "a whisper, to the soul almost inaudible in the profoundest stillness of the spirit—lost, restored again, strengthened, repeated, struggling amidst the emotions that toss him to and fro, but following him, till out of the belly of hell the will of the Almighty Disposer is confessed."

As to the other case contemplated in the thesis which we have been endeavoring to establish—the case of a man who, in the judgment of the Church, has not been called, or is no longer called, to do an ecclesiastical work—we have only to say that the judgment of the Church must settle the question of his continuing in office, as it settled the question of his entrance into it. These two things must concur, in order to warrant any man in exercising an ordinary office in the Church—the judgment of the Church, and the conscientious conviction of the man himself. If either be absent, the man has no right to the office. This conclusion is inevitable from the general doctrine of vocation as held by the Protestant Churches, both Lutheran and Reformed, and as expounded in the preceding part of this article. There might be, and doubtless would be, a practical difficulty in dealing with this class of cases, which would not be encountered in dealing with the other class; but the general doctrine of vocation must determine both.

We come now to consider the doctrine of the Church of God, in reference to demission, as against the doctrine of Rome concerning the "indelible character." We confess to some disappointment in not finding discussed by Protestant Theologians the specific question we have discussed in this article. Voetius, for example, treats of several modes of "*desertio ministerii*," but not

of the particular mode of "desertion" on account of the absence of any evidence of a call.* Their view, therefore, must be gathered from their doctrine of vocation, and this is the same as that which we have endeavored to expound. That they held no other view than that which we have been defending, may be further gathered from the acknowledged *dictum* we have already quoted from Gerhard, that the same reason holds for a man's demitting office and for his not taking it up in the first instance, and from their denunciations of the Papal doctrine of the indelible character and of *titular* dignities in the Papacy. As to this last abuse, Calvin, for example, says (Inst. L. iv., c. 7, sec. 23): "Let them tell me upon what principle they require him to be considered as a bishop who never, even in appearance, with his little finger touches the least portion of the duty." So also the Lutheran theologian, Chemnitz (*Examen Con. Trident. De Sacramento Ordinis*): "This is justly to be blamed in the Papal orders, that they retain the title without the thing, and usurp the benefits of the titles without performing the duties. . . . The lectors do not read that the people may understand. The singers do not raise the tunes, that the people may sing. The bishops do not teach, the presbyters do not administer the sacraments to the people." We are very far from insinuating that our "W. C.'s" are as bad as the titular dignitaries of apostate Rome; but we insist that a man who does not touch with his little finger the least portion of the *officium*, ("nullam officii partem,") has a slender claim to the *office* or to the title which describes it. Surely every such man may be said, with more than ordinary emphasis, to "walk in a vain show."

We propose, in the last place, briefly to consider the doctrine of our Constitution upon demission. It is conceded on all hands that the Constitution allows of demission, without censure, of everything but the office and the title. We have no need, therefore, to argue this point. But it is contended by the brethren on the other side that it makes the offices of minister, ruling elder, and deacon "perpetual;" that they can neither be "laid

*See his *Politica Ecclesiastica*, P. II., L. iii., Tract ii., c. 10.

aside at pleasure," nor be taken away but by deposition. (Form of Government, c. xiii. sec. 6.) This looks decisive; and we admit that it is decisive against that part of the thesis we have been defending, which concerns *compulsory* demission. Our Constitution exhibits a very great, and in general a just, jealousy of the rights of the officers and members of the Church, while it is jealous also for the jurisdiction of its courts. So, on the one hand, it ordains that no man shall lay down his office at his own pleasure—that is, without the action of the court—and on the other, that he shall not be "divested of it" (against his own consent) "except by deposition." Of course, we think that the jealousy here manifested for the rights of officers is excessive. No man has a right, morally, to retain the honors of a title when he has ceased to do the work, and the Church judges him not called, although he may not make himself liable to discipline by any "offence."

But in reference to the other part of our thesis, which concerns *voluntary* demission, it is by no means clear to us that our Book forbids it. We do not rely upon some of the arguments which have been used by brethren on our side of the question. We do not believe, for example, that the "Presbytery" is the source of power, and that therefore all powers which it has not expressly abandoned, or has not resigned to other courts, it has reserved to itself; and that of these reserved powers this is one, to allow a minister of the Word to demit totally, while the elder or deacon, being subject to the jurisdiction of a "Session," can demit only in part. The theory of our Constitution is, that all power resides radically in the Church as a whole, and, as to its exercise, in the officers and the courts. And as to what powers this court or that may exercise, these are matters which must be determined by the Constitution, which *distributes* the powers according to the will of the Church, under her allegiance to her Divine Head. Ministers might have been ordained, for instance, and governed by the congregational presbytery (the "Session"), or by the Synodical or General Presbyteries, ("Synod" and "General Assembly,") if the Church had so ordered; for all that Christ enjoins is that ordination be done by a presbytery, a college of presbyters. Hence.

the "classical presbytery", known in our Form of Government as "the Presbytery," has no more reserved powers than any other of the courts. Besides, it is clear to us, that all the officers are put on precisely the same footing by the Constitution in regard to this matter of demission.

There is a sense, however, in which *all* the courts have reserved powers, and powers which are reserved, in general terms, by the Constitution itself. Our courts are courts of *conscience* as well as of law. This peculiarity is constantly overlooked by our ruling elders who are professional practitioners in courts which are *only* courts of law.* They forget that there is always a silent recognition in our standards of the supreme authority of the Word of God. So that, provided no injury is done to individual rights, as guaranteed in the Constitution, relief may be given to distressed consciences, if such relief is warranted by the Word of God. The principle laid down in chap. i. of the Form of Government, entitled "Preliminary Principles," (a sort of "Bill of Rights,") is that "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship." Nay, more; in the exercise of discipline, the Church claims the power of making that an "offence" (and therefore an object of censure) which is condemned in the Word of God, although it may not be enumerated among sins in the law of the Church. (See Book of Discipline, c. i., sec. 3.) Hence we find our courts constantly doing things which are supposed to be warranted by the Word, though not by the letter of

* For the same reason, it would seem, the lawyers in our church courts can with difficulty be made to understand that our courts are *penitential* tribunals, and that one great end of discipline is to bring the offender *to inculcate himself*—an end which the civil courts altogether disown. The Inquisition in the Papacy professed, indeed, to be a tribunal of this sort, (a "penitential,") but it was only a pretence. Its atrocious cruelties demonstrated it to be a tribunal of hell, not of the Church. But that our Constitution gives an inquisitorial power to the session, in some sense, is plain from the clause numbered "(1)" in Form of Government, c. ix., sec. 6. For a satisfactory defence of this power of inquest, see Thornwell's Works, Vol. IV., pp. 304-7, and 371-3

the Church's law. Thus, it is very common to ordain elders and deacons by the laying on of the hands of the session, although the Book prescribes a different method. Our Foreign Missionary Committee exercises powers with respect to ministers, which the law gives expressly to the Presbyteries, because the Committee acts in the name of the General Assembly, as a court empowered to conduct missions, and therefore empowered to remove ministers from one field to another, without consulting the Presbyteries of which they are members, and to the jurisdiction of which they are constitutionally subject. Indeed, all our Assembly's Committees are *commissions*, and not mere committees; and yet commissions are not recognised in our Constitution. In the face of these facts, it seems not a little odd that our courts should be so rigid in adhering to the letter of the law where the conscience of a minister is to be relieved by allowing him to lay down his office. They prefer to run the risk, rather than yield, of forcing him to leave the Church of his birth and of his choice, and to join another as a private member; and when this step has been taken, they at last acknowledge, *without censure*, that he is no longer a minister, by simply striking his name from the roll! Would it not be more sensible, as well as more in accordance with Christian charity, to release the burdened brother? We think it would; and should feel assured, in voting for his release, that we were honoring the Word of God and our Constitution. We are fully persuaded that the "divesting," which the Constitution contemplates, is a divesting *against the consent* of the party divested. This interpretation is confirmed by what follows in that chapter, in reference to the demission of the active duties of the office. Even demission to this extent, is the implication of the law, shall not take place without the consent of the party, except by advice of Presbytery.

It is objected to this view, that we are advocating the principle known as the "higher law." We are doing no such thing; we are interpreting a particular statute by the analogy of the law or code, considered as a whole. We are attempting to show that the statute has no application to the case of *voluntary* demission of ecclesiastical office by consent of the Church and the formal

act of the court having jurisdiction; that this case, if a "*casus omissus*," is not so in the sense of the lawyers, but belongs to the reserved powers granted in the Word of God, and *recognised, in a general and comprehensive way, by the law itself.*

It is said, again, that there is great danger of making the tenure of office in the ministry very loose. We answer, *first*, that this objection does not come with the best grace in the world from those who make *entrance* into the ministry very loose. Who does not know how elastic the statutes touching the qualifications of ministers in our Church become in the hands of the Presbyteries—how constantly a friendly contest is going on between the Presbyteries and those brethren whom the Church has appointed to aid their candidates in acquiring the knowledge and discipline by which they may be fitted for their work—how it has almost become a thing of course for a young man, who has been once received as a candidate, to be in due time ordained—to how great an extent the Presbyteries fail to demand in a candidate evidence of gifts and even of intelligence at all above the popular average? If there must be rigor, let it be impartially exercised in regard to candidates as well as to the unhappy class of ministers we have been considering. We answer, *secondly*, that this danger, supposed, is altogether imaginary in such a system as ours. There is a force of public sentiment in the people and in the ministry, which will, on the one hand, discourage applications for release on the part of ministers who judge themselves not called, and, on the other, make it exceeding difficult to bring the Presbytery to the point of *compelling* incompetent ministers to lay down their office. The danger appears to us to be in the contrary direction.

It is even said that our view squints towards "rotation" in the offices of the Church. This objection scarcely deserves a serious answer. Is there no difference between the position that a man who is well qualified for his office by gifts and experience, who is growing in usefulness and honor, and is receiving the tokens of the divine blessing upon his labors, must lay down his office when a particular day comes, and the position that a man who is not qualified must lay down his office? Is there no difference be-

tween saying that the tenure of office must be settled by the Almanac, and that it must be settled by the indications of the will of the Holy Ghost?

But we are not to settle this solemn question of demission by considerations of expediency. To the law and to the testimony. If we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us.

ARTICLE VI.

THE GRATUITOUS IMPUTATION OF SIN.

The question whether the Augustinian theology teaches that sin may be justly imputed to or charged upon the guiltless without their concurrence, is now a question of vital importance to every branch of the Presbyterian community in our land, and we propose to devote the present article to a consideration of it. Dr. Hodge, for many years past, has decidedly taken the affirmative, and in his *Theology* repeats his previous utterances, and not only insists that this doctrine is an integral part of the Calvinistic system, and that it was held by Augustine, and by the representative divines of the Church ever since his day, but also that it is fundamental to the Protestant theology and evangelical system of doctrine as taught in the word of God. We cannot acquiesce in this representation, but, on the contrary, insist that it is unauthorised; and further, that it proceeds upon a misconception of the meaning of sundry terms employed in our theological language in relation to the doctrine of original sin. In a single brief article, we can present but few of the results of a protracted and thorough examination, and few only of the multitude of facts which may be alleged to prove that the doctrine referred to has not only never been recognised as a part of the Calvinistic system, but has always been regarded as hostile to the distinguishing principles of that system. The subject is one of vital importance,