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ARTICLE I.

THE DIACONATE.*

The Committee appointed last year to report to the Synod, at its present meeting, on the subject of the Diaconate, respectfully present the following paper:

The Committee in taking up the subject referred to them have acted under the impression that the purpose of their appointment was not that they should attempt an exhaustive treatment of it, but should consider it in certain aspects in which either principles underlying the diaconal office may be developed, or theoretical differences be discussed, or the points indicated in which our practice is defective. Accordingly, we propose, after a brief statement of certain assumptions in reference to which there is universal agreement among us, to submit the results of our reflections under the following heads: first, The Relations of the Diaconate to the Presbyterate; secondly, The Scope of the Deacon's Functions; and thirdly, The Sphere of his Operations.

*This paper was presented as a report to the Synod at its recent sessions at Spartanburg, and appears in the REVIEW in accordance with a request of that body. It will be observed that the report was a partial one, discussing only the first head of the general scheme of topics which it proposes to cover. The Committee were directed to submit the remainder at the next sessions of the Synod.

to a fault. It gives without stint its material to make other communions, but never compasses sea and land to make one proselyte. It blocks out the truth from the quarry, and throws with generous hand the pabulum of thought to every people. Popular manipulators appropriate and adapt it to their uses. Still she abides by her quarry work, her grand mission to feed the world with truth, rejoicing and continuing to rejoice that "nevertheless every way Christ is preached." This is noble. But has not the time come, when we must train our children and ourselves to a more cohesive loyalty to the Presbyterian Church? Has not the time about come when we should more perfectly popularise the two great fundamentals of Presbyterianism, the *elder* and the *family*, and take the field as well as abide by the foundry? Nay, the Presbyterian Church in this country owes it to Christ and to herself more perfectly to unfurl her banners, and instead of a popular literature, to hold up to the world the sturdy religion of Knox and of Murray, of Calvin and Coligny, of Augustine and Paul. Let us honor the faith which it is our honor to possess.

D. E. FRIERSON.

ARTICLE VII.

THE REVISED BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER.

The Committee of Publication have, in accordance with instructions of the Assembly of 1878, issued the last revision of the Book of Church Order now submitted to the final vote of the Presbyteries. It may be neither inappropriate nor untimely to make this the occasion for submitting some remarks in historical review of this great work, and noting some of the more important amendments of our "constitutional rules" contained in it.

It is now over twenty-one years since, under appointment of the Assembly at Lexington, Kentucky, a Committee, composed of ecclesiastics so conspicuous as Thornwell, Robert Breckinridge, McGill, Hodge, Swift, and Judges Sharswood, Leavitt, and

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Allen, began the second general revision of our rules of Discipline. There had been a previous general revision near forty years before, from 1816 to 1821; but by reason of the growth and development of the Presbyterian Church in that forty years, it had become a prevalent conviction among the leading ecclesiastics of the Church, that the Church needed, in the language of Dr. Thornwell, "a more articulate and more pronounced exposition of our Church Order and Government, as these have been elucidated in the discussions and controversies of the last thirty years."

After a most laborious consideration of the subject, under the lead of Dr. Thornwell, this Committee submitted as the result of their labors to the Assembly of 1859, a "Revised Book of Discipline"—the basis of that now before our Presbyteries. It was pronounced even then, by those who examined it, a work of singular merit and worthy the genius of Dr. Thornwell; though it was also vigorously assailed, and called forth the two Essays of Dr. Thornwell, in defence of his work in the SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, to be found in his "Works, Vol. IV.," pp. 300–375. These we would specially commend to the perusal of those who may yet be in doubt in regard to the changes in the Book of Discipline. After some able discussion, the subject was recommitted, and in 1860 additional members were added to the Committee, with instructions to suggest modifications of the Form of Government also.

Then followed the war and the division of the Committee. In the Northern Assembly of 1863, a report was submitted, and that Assembly adopted seven of the twelve chapters of the Book of Discipline. But just at that time a movement was initiated looking to the reunion of the Old and New School Churches, which was consummated in 1868. This movement, naturally enough, suspended the work of revision, since it was to be feared that the adoption of a new Form of Government and Book of Discipline at that time by one of the parties might rear a barrier to the contemplated union. After the reunion, the united Church was so engrossed with the rearrangement of its executive agencies and adapting itself to the new order of things, as to be unable

to prosecute the work of revision suspended in 1863; and besides, the New School portion of the body had not been a party to the revision, nor had it yet become interested in it. It was therefore not until the Assembly of 1878, at Pittsburgh, that the work of revision was resumed by giving it in charge to a Committee embracing in its numbers the very best ecclesiastical ability and experience in the Church. The names of McGill and Hatfield, their Permanent and Stated Clerks almost from time immemorial; Moore, the compiler of the New Digest; West and Patton, both conspicuous for the ability with which they had conducted celebrated cases; R. W. Patterson and Judges Strong, Allison, Breckinridge, Moore, and Nixon, furnish a sufficient guarantee that the work of revision will be ably done.

The Southern Assembly, in 1861, as soon as organized, evinced its sense of the importance of the work of revision which had been begun in 1857 and reported in 1859, by adding other members to the Committee with Dr. Thornwell, with instructions to continue the revision of the Book of Government and Discipline and the Directory for Worship. This Committee was unable to meet, owing to the troubles and confusion of the war, before the death of Dr. Thornwell. But taking up the work where he had left it, they reported to the Assembly of 1866, at Memphis, a Revised Book of Church Government and Discipline, which was carefully examined by the Assembly and sent down for approval by the Presbyteries. Just at that time, however, was opened the question of the union of the Synods of Kentucky and Missouri with the Southern Assembly, and, in prospect of the immediate accession of those Synods, leading members of the Committee of revision publicly advised that the Presbyteries should not take final action on the subject until the Presbyteries in Kentucky and Missouri might have a voice in the modifications to be made. In view of this state of the case, very few of the Presbyteries voted to approve of the Book. But on the admission of these Synods, delegates from the Synod of Kentucky feeling that it was due to the other Synods who had suspended the work of revision on their account, that the proposal to resume the work should come from themselves, it was therefore overtured the Assembly of 1869,

that the Revised Book be taken up then and there; and after being amended by a Committee of the Assembly, in the light of the amendments sent up by the Presbyteries, be sent down to the Presbyteries, "that the Presbyteries express their assent to such portions thereof as may meet their approval, and send up also to the next Assembly objections to any portions they disapprove of, with a request that the portions disapproved of be revised by that Assembly and sent down to the Presbyteries, with a view to final action by the Assembly of 1871. At the Assembly of 1870, the report of the Committee on the responses of the Presbyteries was, that "of forty-seven Presbyteries reporting, twenty-seven favored further revision and the early adoption of the Book; and on the other hand, twelve sent amendments, with an expression of general approval of the Book; seven express a wish that, in view of the unsettled condition of the present period, the Book may not now be pressed upon the Church." The movement made in the direction of union with the North, by the appointment of commissioners by the Philadelphia Assembly of 1870, to confer with the Louisville Assembly, led to a general concurrence, in the judgment of the seven Presbyteries, that the unsettled state of things rendered it unwise to press revision further at that time. The Assembly therefore referred all the amendments proposed by the various Presbyteries to the original Committee on revision, to be incorporated into the New Book, if approved by a majority. The unsettled state of things continuing, this Committee did not make report till the Assembly of 1872, and then only on the Rules of Discipline, which were sent down to the Presbyteries. It was reported to the Assembly of 1873, that "out of the forty-seven Presbyteries reporting, thirty approve of the work of revision and of the Revised Book of Discipline. But of this number, ten, on the ground of expediency or for other reasons, decline to adopt. Of the remainder, fifteen decline to adopt, while three decline to vote either to adopt or not." On account of the continued unsettled state of things, the Assembly suspended again the work of revision. In the Assembly at Savannah, 1876, seeing that the question of our relation with the North, with its excitements, had been practi-

cally settled and the Church almost a unit on the main issue, the earliest opportunity was taken to resume a work felt by many to be so much needed; and, with apparently no division of sentiment, that Assembly sent down the Book of Church Order as last revised, for the approval or disapproval of the Presbyteries. The responses of the Presbyteries indicating that there were certain points about which there was more especially difference of opinion, the Assembly of 1877 adopted the method of sending down to the Presbyteries, that portion both of the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline about which there seemed to be little difference of opinion, and for a separate vote, some eight propositions, two of them alternative propositions, to be voted upon separately by the Presbyteries.

The report of the responses of the Presbyteries to the Assembly of 1878 at Knoxville, shows a very considerable advance toward unity of sentiment. The votes of the Presbyteries on seven of the debatable propositions show a very remarkable degree of unanimity. Out of sixty-four Presbyteries, fifty-two affirm the proposition "of cases without process;" forty-four affirm the revised definition of an offence; forty-three affirm the proposition that communicants only shall be electors for pastor; thirty-nine affirm the proposition to transfer unconverted communicants to the roll of non-communicants; thirty-nine affirm the proposition for inserting the examination rule into the constitution; thirty-five affirm the proposition for ecclesiastical commissions; and twenty-eight against seventeen of the Presbyteries that voted at all affirm the proposition for the involuntary demission of the ministry, which was also sent with the Assembly's propositions by the Committee; while no less than forty-seven affirm the proposition for the voluntary demission. The vote on adopting "the Book as a whole," as it stood incomplete, was but twenty-nine; but very obviously this came from the misunderstanding of the overture sent down to the Presbyteries, some being unwilling to adopt the Book as a whole before they knew whether the separate propositions would be adopted and made part of the Book. The chairman of the Committee claimed, and no doubt justly, that while but twenty-nine Presbyteries voted

to adopt the Book as it stood incomplete, the number in favor of a revised Book was really forty-two. The very large majorities affirming the separate propositions, about which there has been most controversy, indicate a remarkable agreement where there seemed at first to be much division of sentiment. It may therefore be fairly inferred that, on a vote to approve the Book, with these separate propositions embodied in it, there will be a much nearer agreement than on votes taken heretofore. The fact, too, that the twenty-nine Presbyteries who have voted to approve the Book even in its incomplete state, and most of the separate propositions, also comprise about one-half of the ministers of the Church, and about five-sevenths of the 5,428 ruling elders, and the further fact that two-thirds of the Presbyteries voted in favor of going on with the work of revision, would seem to indicate a growing desire in the Church that the Revised Book be accepted as the "constitutional rules" of the Church, in place of the present Book.

In view of the very cumbrous and inconvenient method in which a general revision of our constitutional rules must be carried on, it is somewhat surprising that the work should have reached its present stage with comparatively so little division and agitation. The provision of the famous "Barrier Act" of the Kirk of Scotland in 1696, embodied in our Constitution, providing for the submission of any changes of the constitutional rules by the Assembly to the Presbyteries for their sanction, and then the enacting of them by the Assembly, contemplated originally only the submission of but one, or, at most, a few propositions to the Presbyteries. In that case the process is very simple. But when it comes to the submission of so many propositions in a general revision to be approved or rejected, each one of them by sixty-four Presbyteries, it is a different matter. That so general an agreement has been reached is of itself proof sufficient that the Church is essentially at one on the subject. Indeed, it is well known that the chief part of the discussions and divisions have arisen on incidental questions of expediency and outside issues not involving the real merits of the propositions of the New Book. On a test vote in the Knoxville Assembly, on a square

issue presented by the minority of the Committee in charge of the reports from the Presbyteries, whether the revision shall be indefinitely postponed, the majority against indefinite postponement was not far from 4 to 1; and on the vote to send down the Book as completed to the Presbyteries, the vote was nearly 5 to 1. Both these votes—96 to 28 in the one case, and 95 to 20 in the other—indicate a full house on the occasion, and show that these are fairly representative expressions of the opinions of the Church.

The correctness of this growing sentiment in favor of a revision of our Government and Discipline in our Church, as evinced by these votes in the Knoxville Assembly, has recently received a strong confirmation in the resumption of the work of revision by the Northern Assembly after a suspension of fifteen years. And it is no less gratifying than surprising to find the leaders of thought in the Northern Church commending without stint our Revised Book of Order on its recent issue by the Committee of Publication. Even the *Presbyterian Banner* of Pittsburgh, hitherto so prone to ask concerning every thing Southern, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" in a masterly article on this subject, after an elaborate history of Revision from 1857 to 1863, and of the work in the Southern Church from 1861 to 1878, speaks in the following generous and intelligent terms of the Book now before our Presbyteries:

"The Southern Book is a more extensive work than the Revised Book of 1863. It includes the 'Form of Government' as well as the 'Book of Discipline,' and its revisions are not limited merely to verbal corrections or occasional new insertions, but make a re-cast and re-arrangement of the whole structure of both these departments. Radical improvements are made throughout. The doctrine of Ecclesiastical and other Commissions is developed, electors of Church Officers sharply defined, difference between Ecclesiastical and other Offences stated, Judicial and Non-Judicial Process distinguished, Common Fame is abolished as an accuser, and the Committee of Prosecution erected into an Original party with the right of appeal. Every indictment is to begin, 'In the name of the Presbyterian Church of the United States,' and conclude with the words, 'against the peace, unity, and purity of the Church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King and Head thereof.' Provision is made for the demission of the ministry, and

special discipline for ministers who have turned aside to secular callings. It is no copy of the Revised Book of 1863, but a new Book, and rejects some of the most important features of this Book. It is Presbyterianism of the highest and purest kind, and the logical relations of all the parts of the Book, the clear statement of principles and duties, and the emphasis given to the Covenant of God, and to Doctrine and Discipline as an institute of God, removes it the farthest from the modern liberalism that would let everything drift as it pleases, or fly at loose ends in the wind. There are some things in it we would prefer to see otherwise; but on the whole, it is far in advance, as a 'Book of Church Order,' of anything that has appeared in this country."

In the *Interior* of Chicago, of November 21st, we find an editorial, evidently from the pen of Dr. Halsey, inspired, we doubt not, by the recollection of his noble and manly fight, shoulder to shoulder with Dr. Patton, against Swing and his adherents in the Chicago Presbytery and in the Synod of Illinois, which speaks of our Revised Book in such terms as the following:

"So far as we have examined it, we can have no hesitation in saying that it is a great improvement on the partially accepted Book of 1863, even as that was a great improvement on the old Discipline. It sacrifices no single essential principle either of polity or discipline contained in the old Book, while what it adds or restates, renders the old far more intelligible and perfect. If the two stood before us to-day, for the first time, to be judged on their own merits, we could not for a moment hesitate to accept the new as a vast improvement in fulness, in clearness of statement, and in logical arrangement. On reading its lucid definitions, its ampler statement of essential points, and its better proportioned chapters, one cannot help wishing that the Presbyterian fathers of 1788, 1789, while they were on the work of revision and amendment, had given us a work like this, in place of our excessively curt, and sometimes not unobscure, little treatises.

"The Book of Church Order is in two parts of equal length, the first containing the Form of Government in seven chapters, the second the Rules of Discipline in fifteen chapters. Many of the difficult, perplexing questions which perpetually arise in our Church courts, and lead to endless debates, would be at once settled and ended under the sharply defined and unmistakable statements of this new book. This is especially the case with the admirable chapters on Church Officers and Church Courts, and with those on Offences, on Jurisdiction, on Original Parties, on Election of Church Officers, on Judicial and non-Judicial Process, on Appeals, and on Complaints. With scarcely an exception, the book as a whole meets our cordial approbation. As to its general tone, through-

out, we can heartily respond to what the *Presbyterian Banner* says: 'It is Presbyterianism of the highest and purest kind, in the logical relations of the book, the clear statement of principles and duties, and the emphasis given to the Covenant of God, and to Doctrine and Discipline as an institute of God.'

"As in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, everything is clear, logical, and exhaustive—adequately proportioned as to parts, and well nigh perfect as a whole. No intelligent reader can fail to see that the compilers of this new Book of Church Order, have reached something of the same precision of statement, and perfectness of systemisation. They have given to the ecclesiastical standards precisely that clear-cut finish of definition and that unmistakable intention as to the import of the law, which have so distinguished our doctrinal standards. It would unquestionably be a great gain, and a great relief from doubtful disputations, if our own Church had a book like this; and the strong probability is that the Southern Presbyteries will approve it. The Southern Church is proverbial for its conservatism and strong attachment to the past; but it can hardly set aside a work so excellent in itself as this, and at the same time so conservative of all the grand essential elements of Presbyterianism and so true to the old Westminster Standards."

This is very strong, and, evidently, very intelligent testimony; and the more confirmatory in that it comes from outside parties who cannot be suspected of having become partisans from participating in the discussions of revision during the last twelve years. It comes also from men representing the ecclesiastical conservatism of the Northern Church.

That our revision is a wise one—wise in practical wisdom—is affirmed also, so far as we know, by the ecclesiastical men of the Northern Church who have had most experience in the application of the present "constitutional rules" to concrete cases in maintaining the Presbyterian doctrine and order. Rev. Drs. West and Skinner in the midst of their great struggle for Presbyterian order in the case of McCune, frequently expressed the wish that they had our Revised Discipline instead of the present Book; for with that they would have been able to restrain their opponents from the raising of side issues, and entangling the case in technicalities and special pleadings. Since their triumph in the Pittsburgh Assembly, they have repeated their opinion. Says Dr. West of our Revised Book, in a letter to a friend:

"Abating one or two unimportant particulars, I am highly delighted

with it. It is superior in every way to any Presbyterian Manual of Discipline I have ever seen, and, if adopted by your Church, will unquestionably relieve Church courts of many of the perplexities and improper disputes that so constantly arise in cases of judicial and executive administration. That it will operate efficiently, if adopted and faithfully carried out, to promote the peace, piety, and unity of the Church, no competent ecclesiastic who has studied it can doubt for a moment. I have pondered it carefully and frequently, and find that it provides most wisely for the most troublesome exigencies that, unforeseen, yet too often arise from the very inception to the consummation of our various processes. It is a great advance upon the Revised Book reported for the Old School Church years ago by the lamented Dr. Thornwell; and I could wish no greater blessing, in this line, for the Northern Presbyterian Church, than its unanimous adoption of the Southern Book as its own, and the constant and faithful practice of its provisions by all our courts. Every intelligent and sagacious presbyter must admit it is the result of long experience, wisdom, and care."

This we take to be a very remarkable testimony from confessedly one of the very ablest ecclesiastics of his Church; and one, as is well known, whose prejudices have had no leaning in favor of anything Southern in its origin. It is the manly and magnanimous testimony of an impartial critic entitled by his eminent celebrity to express an opinion.

Dr. Thomas H. Skinner, become justly famous as the leader and defender of Presbyterianism in the McCune case, fully endorses Dr. West's opinion, saying:

"I heartily endorse Dr. West's letter. I have not seen the more perfect copy of your Book of Discipline. The one I had was such a marked improvement on the old Book that I could not but commend it. I am sure that it will greatly serve the interests of religion and order, and facilitate the action of the courts of the Church. The defects of our present Book are glaring, and it is wide open not only to the captious obstructions of accused persons and their friends, but also to honest objections which delay justice in our judicatories. I have learned the lesson by a painful experience in Presbytery, in Synod, and in the Assembly."

We have other similar testimony from the Northern Church,*

*The testimony of Dr. Francis L. Patton, another member of the Northern Committee on Revision, in favor of the New Book of Discipline, might also have been cited here. "The New Book is certainly a great improvement on the old, and will make process far simpler and

borne by such as are best qualified to express an opinion, but it is needless to multiply witnesses. We fully recognise the fact that this is not an issue to be settled by authority. But it certainly is legitimate to show for the benefit of those who have hesitated about our revision as too radical and revolutionary, that disinterested conservative judges and those best qualified to give an opinion fully concur with us in sentiment, both as to the character and extent of the changes needed.

The plea has indeed been urged with some plausibility, that instead of a "New Book" we need simply amendments inserted into the old. That plea will not be pressed by any who have actually attempted, as we have, to insert the amendments necessary into the old book. They will find this to be one of the cases in which he that "putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment," finds that "the rent is made worse." For not only does the want of logical arrangement of the present book render any neat patch-work impossible, but the insertion of one important amendment involves change in so many other places as would make the book a mere confused medley of propositions throughout.

From what has been said, it will be seen that the steady increase of opinion in our own Church in favor of the importance and the necessity of a revision of our Constitutional Rules; the existence of the same opinion in the Northern Church which has recently found expression in the action of the Pittsburgh Assembly resuming the work of revision suspended in 1863; and the

much less liable to mistake. The points in my mind are (1) The clear definition respecting original parties, who they are. (2) The detailed method of prescribing the order to be followed (3) Making all prosecutions run in the name of the Church. (4) The use of a more discriminating phraseology throughout." In connexion with some criticism expressing his preference for the old Scotch terminology over that in our Book borrowed from the civil courts, and suggesting some minor defects, Prof. Patton says: "I think the true view should be that the court is never a party: that it is the *cause*, not the court which goes up to the higher courts, that the parties are the original accusers and accused at every stage where an appeal is taken."

Dr. Patton's remarkable experience in the *Swing* case entitles him to ~~ave~~ and to express an opinion on the provisions of a Book of Discipline.

testimony above recited of these disinterested judges from the outside best qualified to pronounce an opinion to the singular excellence of the revision which we have made, all goes to create a very strong presumption in favor of the Revised Book anterior to any critical examination of the changes made in it in the way of improvement.

The ordinary limits of such an article as this forbid any examination in detail of the provisions of the Book now before the Presbyteries. All that will here be attempted is some general considerations going to show the benefits that may be expected from its adoption as the constitutional rules of the Southern Presbyterian Church.

It is not claimed that the Revised Form of Government has introduced any new principle of Church Order not already asserted in the standards of the Church. But it is very obvious that it has brought the formulas of Government and Discipline into more perfect conformity with the utterances of our doctrinal standards on the subject of the Church, its government and discipline. While it retains every important proposition of the present Book, it supplies omissions with statements from the recognised standards of Presbyterianism and the interpretations of the General Assembly, and by a logical rearrangement of the statements, adapts the Book to use in the practical administration of the Church. It must have struck every one who has paid any attention to the subject, that, aside from many omissions to speak where it is proper, there is a striking contrast between the loose and full statement of the doctrine of the Church, so far as any statement is made, in our present Government and Discipline, and the strong, explicit, clear cut statements of the doctrine of the Church and its government, as made in our doctrinal standards. And there is a very interesting historical reason for this contrast. The fathers who originally framed our Form of Government and Discipline accepted what had come to be considered the Church Government and Discipline of the Westminster Assembly. Whereas, it was not really the Presbyterian order of the Westminster Assembly at all, but the order which, in spite of that Assembly, the Erastian Parliament had forced upon the

Presbyterianism of Britain. It is a noteworthy fact, that while the Parliament accepted the statements of the Westminster Assembly in the Confession of Faith, as to the doctrine of the Church and its government, made during the earlier sessions of the Assembly, it would not accept the same principles several years later, when embodied in a Form of Government and Discipline. This conflict between the Parliament and the Assembly forms one of the most remarkable episodes in its history. Finding themselves in a lean minority in the Assembly, the Erastians and Independents adopted the policy of acting against the Presbyterian Assembly through their agents in Parliament, when the conclusions of the Assembly were laid before that body for ratification. By the time the Assembly had reached the subject of Church Government, the Scotch had ceased to be so essential to the protection of England against its King, and therefore the influence of Presbyterians was on the wane. Hence, when the Assembly sent up to Parliament its scheme of Government, involving the *jure divino* right of Church Government, the record is: "Mr. Glynn and Mr. Whitaker (in Parliament) spoke largely against the *jus divinum* of any particular form of government; and when the question was put to the vote, the decision was against the proposition of the Assembly; and instead of determining that the government of the Church was of divine authority, by Congregational, Classical, and Synodical Assemblies, their resolution was, *that it is lawful* and agreeable to the word of God that the Church be governed by Congregational, Classical, and Synodical Assemblies. The loss of this important question in Parliament greatly affected the minds of the Scottish Commissioners and the Presbyterians in the Assembly."*

A still more exciting struggle on the question of *Jus Divinum* between the Assembly and the Parliament occurred on the occasion of the Assembly's sending up its Rules of Discipline, providing that the elderships (Sessions) should have power to exclude the profane from the Lord's Table. The Parliament refused such power to the elders, and undertook to declare what sins

* Hist. of Westm. Assembly, pp. 113-122, Pres. Board of Publication.

should exclude from the Lord's Table, and after enumerating several sins, enacted that commissioners appointed by the civil government should decide in cases of sins not enumerated; thus excluding the elders altogether. Thereupon, as we learn from the recently discovered "Minutes of the Westminster Assembly," at the session of March 20, 1645, Mr. Marshall, referring to this Act of Parliament as lying heavy upon the conscience of himself and brethren, moved that a committee be appointed to prepare a petition to Parliament, which was done. In this petition, after pointing out that this appointment of commissioners to fence the Lord's Table is contrary to Christ's appointment, they proceed to say: "Wherefore, your petitioners, in discharge of their fidelity to God, to His Church, and to your Honors, do humbly pray that the several elderships may be sufficiently enabled to keep back all such as are notoriously scandalous from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, of which we must, as formerly we have done, say it expressly belongeth unto them by *divine right* and by the will and appointment of Jesus Christ," etc.

The Parliament affected great indignation at this petition, and after grave deliberation, entered upon their journals "a narrative of the matter of fact concerning the *breach of the privilege of Parliament* by the petition of the Assembly of Divines," in which they set forth how the Assembly was called to treat of such matters as should be proposed to them, and no other; that by Act of Parliament, Oct., 1643, they are authorised to treat among themselves upon such a Discipline and Government as may be most agreeable to God's word; that the Parliament having received their advice on this subject, saying that Jesus Christ hath placed in his ministers and elders of his Church the power of keeping away scandalous persons from the Lord's Table—notwithstanding both houses did ordain that commissioners appointed by law should exercise this power; that the Assembly doth, under the name of a petition, oppose their judgment as an Assembly in relation to a law passed both houses unto the judgment of Parliament; that it appears to their consciences to be so contrary to that way of government which Christ hath appointed in his Church, etc., the House hath resolved and declared

that this petition thus presented by the Assembly is a breach of the privilege of Parliament.

Thereupon Mr. Samuel Browne, Mr. Fiennes, Sir John Evelyn, Sir John Wentworth, Mr. Rouse, and others—twelve in all—are appointed a committee “to communicate in a fair manner unto the Assembly of Divines the vote of this House upon the breach of privilege in their petition; and are to enlarge themselves upon the several heads of this narrative.”*

Accordingly at the session of the Assembly, April 30, 1646, the Committee appeared in the Assembly, Sir John Evelyn opened a long speech, by informing the Assembly that, in the petition, the House “did find things that did strike at the foundation and roots of the privileges of Parliament”; and descanted upon the condescension of Parliament in thus sending a committee to confer with such offenders.

Mr. Fiennes told them that “in Parliament resides the power of making laws, and, once passed, all are subject to them. Whosoever shall infuse anything to the contrary in the mind of those that should obey them, are guilty of a grave offence,” and inflicted upon them a terrible rebuke, reminding them all the while of the grace of Parliament in condescending to reason with them.

Mr. Browne made an elaborate historical discourse to prove that Parliament is the supreme judicature, spiritual and ecclesiastical.

Sir Benjamin Rudyard declared “this *jus divinum* is of a formidable and tremendous nature. ‘Decency and order’ are variable, and therefore, cannot be *jure divino*. The civil magistrate is a Church officer in every Christian commonwealth.”†

After thus—if one may use an expressive slang term in this case—“*bulldozing*” the Assembly, the Committee left the famous Nine Questions as to the *jure divino* of Elderships, Elders, Classical and other Assemblies, to be answered by order of the House of Commons, and requiring each member to *subscribe his name to his vote on each proposition*,‡ obviously for the purpose of intimidating them.

*Minutes of the Assembly of Divines, pp. 456–458.

†Minutes of West. Ass. pp. 448, 458.

‡Minutes West. Ass., pp. 225, 226.

Now, the point of this summary of a long story is, that in the matter of Church Government the theory of the Westminster Assembly was suppressed, and the system which was forced upon the Church was in large measure permeated by the Erastian poison of the Parliament, and this was strengthened by the leaven of Erastianism in the scheme establishing the Church of Scotland. That the ideas of our fathers who framed our Form of Government were derived from the Presbyterian usages that grew up under the Acts of Parliament, rather than from the original theory of the Westminster Assembly that framed our Confession of Faith. And hence the contrast between the bold, clear propositions concerning the Church and its *jure divino* order, and the statements of our Form of Government.

Any thoughtful student will see at a glance that the Revised Book contains more nearly the original theory of the Church and its government held by the Assembly that framed our Confession than any system of Church order constituted since the Westminster Assembly. So far, therefore, as the argument from venerable antiquity and the fathers of Presbyterianism goes, it is, doubtless, with the Revised Book, rather than with the old Book.

But, returning to the Book itself and the more important improvements in it: in place of the introductory chapter which is in the nature of an apology, all well enough for a Church of one hundred and seventy-seven ministers and four hundred churches, contributing for religious purposes, outside of current expenses, less than one thousand dollars, but surely unnecessary for a Church "whose sound has gone forth into all the earth." No important truth is set forth in this chapter that is not better exhibited elsewhere in our standards. It probably should be recited in a historical preface to the Revised Book as an interesting historic document. But surely its place is better supplied with the statement "of the doctrine of Church Government," in Chapter I., and that grand old preface from the original Westminster Form of Government in Chapter II. of the Revised Book, which ought never to have been omitted. The conservatism that clings so affectionately to ancient symbols cannot well object to the restoration of this venerable preface with the summary of

propositions concerning Christ's kingly relations to the Church, voted at the 76th Session, October 20th, 1643.

On the other hand, the Revised supplies here a very important omission of the old Book, in the statement that the doctrine of *jure divino* government by no means excludes the evangelical denominations from a place in the true Church of Christ. That "this visible unity of the Church of Christ, though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations," etc.—a statement not only important but very *timely* in the present age of the Church. It protects, on the one hand, the principle of *jure divino* against the unreasonable charge of "High Churchism," and on the other, silences the clamor of Papists and Campbellites about the "sects" of evangelical Protestantism.

Important omissions are supplied in Chapter II. in the statements concerning "the Nature and Extent of Church Power"; "Of the Particular Church"; and in the specific direction for "the organisation of a particular Church." The value of all the additions in this Chapter will hardly be questioned. While there is no new principle introduced, yet the principle on which the provisions of the present Book rest are distinctly set forth. Indeed, this is one of the great advantages of the Revised Book, that it so clearly brings out the doctrinal principle involved in the provisions for the administration and government of the Church. The shortest and surest method of getting at the meaning and purpose of a law is to get clearly before the mind the principle upon which the law rests. It is a distinguishing mark of the Revised Book that it gives prominence to the principle in every case.

Without noting several minor improvements, we may point to the clear and definite statement in Chapter IV. of the duties and functions of Church officers, in which all must admit the deficiency of the present Book is glaring, while the Revision is every way admirable. Thus, for instance, how marked the contrast between the Revised and the present Book in setting forth the official functions of ruling elders and deacons. Who can distinctly define the duties of either under the vague incidental allusion to the subject in the present Book? Where is the ruling elder who can

find out from this Book what his place is in the Church, and what the functions of his office? One would suppose that a comparison on this single point would constrain every such elder in the Church to accept the Revised Book gladly, unless he should find something elsewhere in the Book which opposed insuperable objections to it. With the provisions of this paragraph in our Book formulating so distinctly the duties of the office which is the distinguishing feature of our system, if the eldership can be brought up to it as the measure of their duty, the Church will be practically revolutionised within five years. With the blessing of God upon the labors of such ruling elders, the Presbyterian Church will stand forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." The lamentable failure of our churches in so many instances to reach the masses of the people is largely due to the fact that the eldership at present is so truly representative of Chapter V. of our present Book, which asserts simply the propriety of an eldership, without any definition of the functions of the office beyond their joint power of jurisdiction as members of the Session. It makes no suggestion of their duties as set in the Church, to have oversight of the flock, to watch over the people, to admonish them of their duties, to guard them against errors, to visit the sick, comfort the mourning, cherish the children—keeping the pastor fully advised of the state of the congregation, upholding his hands, and pointing out to him where his special attention is needed. We are persuaded that if the attention of the ruling elders can be fixed upon this Section 3 of Chapter IV., their voice will be nearly unanimous for the Revised Book.

The Chapter, "Of Church Courts," embracing about one-third of the Revised Book of Government, is essentially the same with Chapters VIII. to XI. of the present Form of Government, except that several important omissions are supplied from what has become accepted usage or declared by the General Assembly to be the meaning, by implication, of the present Book. The chief improvement in this chapter is its setting forth distinctly the "jurisdiction of church courts," for the instruction of office-bearers in regard to the principles which underlie the action of these tribunals. The question so much controverted, heretofore,

as to a quorum of Presbytery, is settled by requiring the presence of at least one ruling elder in Presbytery and three in the Synod to constitute a quorum. Provision is made also for a formal subscription to the formula assented to at ordination; for receiving ministers of other denominations and churches of other denominations into our connexion—none of which will probably be challenged as unwise or improper.

The Section, "Of Ecclesiastical Commissions," especially that part of it relating to commissions of the Synod and General Assembly to try appeals, we confess is less satisfactory to us than any other portion of the Revised Book. That such commission shall be authorised only in case of "appeal"—not in cases of "complaint"—and then "only by consent of parties"—seems so to restrict the power of acting by commission as to render the provision, practically, almost inoperative. Yet, when it is considered that for half a century there has been so decided a difference of judgment on the subject of commissions among the ablest ecclesiastical leaders of the Church, this limited provision for commissions is probably all that can be expected at present. If it shall be found, on fair trial, that the scheme works well and saves much time and trouble, at no sacrifice of truth and justice, the limiting clause will probably be stricken out. Besides, the adoption of the Revised Discipline would relieve the courts of so many of the difficulties attending judicial trials as to render the commission less needful. It will be the part of wisdom for those who, like ourselves, find some things in the Revised Book that we would rather have otherwise, to accept cheerfully what we can get, rather than what we want, in view of the vast advantages of the improvements of the Book in other and vastly more important matters.

As to Chapter VI., "Of Church Order"—its two sections concerning "the doctrine of vocation" and "the doctrine of ordination," though they contain additions to the present Book in the way of supplying omissions, yet they are really but an explanatory preface to what follows concerning the election and ordination of Church officers. This brief definition of terms and exhibit of the principles underlying vocation and ordination, for

the benefit of both the office-bearers and the people who have occasion to take part in the solemn proceedings afterwards described, is manifestly a most valuable provision, and in full accord with the spirit of our system. Of the improvement in Section 3, defining explicitly the qualifications of the electors in the choice of pastor, and confining the right of suffrage to communicants, it is needless to speak, since the voice of two-thirds of the Presbyteries has already decreed in favor of the revised provision.

The remaining four Sections of this Chapter, covering the same ground as Chapters XIII. to XVII. inclusive, of the present Book, are substantially the same as the present Book, and are therefore passed over without notice.

Since these are the more important changes proposed in the Form of Government, it will be perceived that they are not in their character revolutionary, introducing any new principles, but simply supply from sources already recognised as law the defects and omissions of the present Form of Government. Nay, in all the criticisms of twenty years no one has, at least to our knowledge, seriously challenged these amendments as wrong, unwise, or contrary to the spirit of our standards. The chief arguments against the Revised Form of Government have been directed, not against its intrinsic provisions, but chiefly against the expediency of adopting so thorough a revision in times of excitement.

Of the revision of the Book of Discipline there is space here for only a brief comment on a few of the proposed amendments. This portion of the revision is chiefly the work of Dr. Thornwell, but his work has been much improved by the varied criticisms of the Presbyteries since 1859. The claim set up for the Revision by Dr. Thornwell in 1859 is still valid in every particular :

“It has pruned away redundancies and supplied many important omissions; removed incongruities and contradictions to the general tenor of our system; extended privileges which experience has shown to be important; cleared up ambiguities, and reduced our discipline to a logical completeness which it did not possess before; it has simplified the process of appellate jurisdiction and cleared away a highway for our upper courts where all before was rocks and thorns.”

A careful comparison of the Revised with the present Discip-

line will show that this is no extravagant claim in any of its several particulars. The chief improvements in the Revised Book relate to the definition of an offence, how offences shall come before the courts, how the prosecution of offences shall be carried on through the series of courts, or dealt with in certain cases without process.

Of the revised definition of an offence it is unnecessary to say anything further, since the Presbyteries, by a vote of more than two-thirds, have accepted the Revision in this particular. Of the manner in which offences shall come before the courts and be prosecuted—in regard to which the present Book is singularly obscure, ambiguous, and erroneous in principle—the Revised Book, as it seems to us, is singularly felicitous in clearing up the difficulties which environ the provisions of the present Book, by two brief paragraphs (Chap. V. 3, 4) declaring the original and only parties in a case of process are the Church, the accuser, whose honor and purity are to be maintained, and the accused; and the prosecutor, whether voluntary or involuntary, is always the representative of the Church, and has all its rights in the case.”

It will be perceived that this simple, clear-cut statement at once sweeps away all the disputes about “common fame,” and all questions about who are the original parties, those chronic troubles in almost every case of judicial process. It sets forth so clearly the principle that underlies judicial process that none can well fail to comprehend it. And, more important still, it rids the Church of the error of throwing the protection of the Christian commonwealth upon individuals, and thereby making the trial of offences a personal conflict between the prosecutor and the accused and his friends. It is no doubt largely on account of this glaring error in our present Book that discipline in the Church is becoming almost obsolete. Nor is it to be wondered at, that church sessions should hesitate about encouraging persons to prosecute offences, in view of the fact that the prosecution is likely to engender personal feuds in the Church, the end of which no one can foresee. And, indeed, how shall it be expected that a person in the Church will volunteer to assume the position

of prosecutor and thereby subject himself to the odium of affecting to be more scrupulous of conscience and more concerned for the name of the Church than his brethren who seem to consent to let the offence pass without notice, rather than become involved in a personal quarrel?

Another great improvement in the Revised Book relates to the method of appeals. Under our present Book we have the strange incongruity of carrying up the lower court as a party with the case itself to the higher court, to be judged for having given a certain decision. As Dr. Thornwell very aptly puts it, "The appellant appears not only to represent the merits of the case to which he was an original party, but to expose the demerits of the court that refused him justice. He is at once a suitor and a prosecutor. Both issues are tried at the same time and so blended that they constitute but one apparent case. . . . To try at the same time the question of individual right and the question of the integrity of a judge, is an outrage upon common sense, and yet this is what the Old Book does." Surely it is but right reason and common sense that the purpose of an appeal should be simply to transfer the case—the identical case on which the lower court decided, and that the higher court should have before it precisely what the lower court had—the same issue, the same testimony, the same circumstances. It is owing to this singular incongruity that we have in almost every case which comes to the higher courts, the never-failing dispute to begin with, as to who are the parties before the court, and the confusion and entanglements of side issues that renders it impossible to have an *intelligent* final decision.

The provision of the Revised Book for "Cases without process"—that is, not requiring the formalities of a judicial process—has already been endorsed by the Presbyteries by the extraordinary vote of fifty-two out of sixty-three Presbyteries, and therefore needs no discussion here. It is worthy of note, however, that this chapter "Of cases without process" contains the propositions so much controverted in former times, that a communicant confessing an unregenerate heart, but otherwise having been guilty of no offence, may, at the discretion of the Session,

be transferred to the list of non-communicants; also, that a minister who may conclude that he was mistaken, and that God has not called him to the ministry, may be divested of his office without censure. The large vote for these propositions is one of great significance, as showing how the diverse views of the Church have gradually come together, and that therefore the adoption of the Revised Book will leave no great questions of controversy to be agitated among us.

Of the minor improvements in the Book of Discipline it is not important to speak here. These are for the most part only the necessary result in carrying out the important changes already noticed. It is, however, no unimportant change that has been effected by the re-arrangement of the whole, both in the Form of Government and in the Book of Discipline. In the constitutional rules, both of government and discipline, the chief aim should obviously be a book of definitions, forms, and rules, and these in the most compressed form consistent with clearness. Our Book of Government and Discipline should be so arranged as to adapt it to the purposes of a text-book for students in our Theological Seminaries, so that the professor may connect his instructions in the doctrine and order of the Church directly with the propositions of the Book which is to become their manual in all their future professional life. Beyond doubt, the generally admitted deficiency of our younger ministry in knowledge of the law which they are called upon to administer comes from the ill-adaptedness of our present Book as a text-book of instruction, It will hardly be disputed either that the present Book of Government and Discipline is sadly deficient in this respect, or on the other hand, that the Revised Book is eminent in the excellence of its logical arrangement, and its direct and clear expression of what it means. In short, as Dr. Halsey expresses it, "They have given to the ecclesiastical standards precisely *that clear-cut finish of definition and that unmistakable intention as to the import of the law which have so distinguished our doctrinal standards.*"

We contemplate this Book of Church Order now, in its completeness, with singular pleasure. That such a work has been

accomplished by the Church of our love, the Southern Presbyterian Church—leading the Presbyterian Churches of the world in exhibiting our glorious scriptural system in its simplicity and beauty, without any trace of the collar which usurping civil governments put upon the neck of Presbyterianism in the days of our martyr fathers—we confess stir our pride somewhat. As we read the admirable judgments of the most capable judges of the Northern Church—men entitled to have and to express an opinion, and who cannot be suspected of partiality—confirming our own judgment, that we have at last worked out a formula of Presbyterian Church order “far in advance of anything that has appeared in this country,” we feel a glow of high satisfaction. We feel disposed to say, all honor to the men that have labored and toiled in the accomplishment of a task so honorable to our Church. From the immortal Thornwell, who “being dead yet speaketh” in the work he projected, on through the list of the living men who have so laboriously built it up—Adger and E. T. Baird, and Palmer and Armstrong, who have figured more conspicuously in it, with scores of equally earnest though less conspicuous fellow-laborers in the great enterprise—these men have our gratitude and our homage.

There may still be things in the book to which many will have objection. But these points should be yielded now. Our earnest hope is that the Presbyteries will accept this Revision with the same unanimity with which they have approved some of the separate propositions of the Book. A good degree of unanimity will secure the more ready application of its important provisions, without jar or friction, to the administrative and disciplinary work of the Church. While there may still be differences of opinion in regard to matters of detail, let us thank God that we have been able to accomplish so much and go forward with one heart and “one step” to the work of spreading our pure Presbyterian Church order and pure gospel doctrine. It needs no gift of prophecy to foresee that within ten years or less it will become a matter of wonder that the Presbyterian Church endured these deficiencies in her constitutional rules so long. And following our lead, other Presbyterian bodies will make a similar revision.

STUART ROBINSON.