

A
D R A U G H T
OF A
P L A N
OF
GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE
FOR THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN
NORTH-AMERICA.

PROPOSED BY A COMMITTEE APPOINTED FOR
THAT PURPOSE.

P H I L A D E L P H I A :

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M DCC LXXXVI.

AT a meeting of the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, held at Philadelphia in May, 1786,—the Synod appointed the rev. Dr. Witherspoon, Dr. Sproat, Dr. Rodgers, Dr. M'Whorter, Dr. Duffield, Dr. Ewing, Dr. Allison, Dr. Smith, and Dr. Wilson; with Isaac Snowden, esquire, Mr. Robert Taggart and Mr. John Pinkerton, a Committee, to meet in Philadelphia, on the second Tuesday in September next, to prepare a Plan of Government and Discipline for the Presbyterian Church; and to procure Three Hundred Copies thereof to be printed and distributed among the several Presbyteries, in proportion to the number of their members; under the engagement of the Synod, to have the expence of printing and distribution re-imburfed to the Committee at their next meeting. And every Presbytery is required to report in writing to the Synod at their next meeting, their observations on the said Plan of Government and Discipline.

It was also ordered by the Synod, that each Presbytery take effectual measures to raise from each congregation under their care, whether supplied with a pastor, or vacant, a collection previous to the next meeting of Synod, for defraying the expences of printing the public acts of Synod; and for printing and distributing the Plan of Government and Discipline; and for such other purposes as to the Synod shall seem proper: And that each Presbytery send such collections with some one of their members, who shall attend Synod next year.

THE Committee above mentioned met according to appointment, except Dr. Witherspoon, Dr. M'Whorter, and Dr. Allison; and although the members were divided in sentiment on several parts of the Draught, it was finally agreed to, by the majority, as it now stands.

P R E F A C E.

THE Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, being about to establish a system of union and form of discipline for themselves and the subordinate bodies under their care, thought it proper to begin with laying down a few general principles by which they have been governed in deciding upon the several parts of the plan. This, they hope, will make the whole better understood, as well as prevent, in some degree, such rash and uncandid reflections as commonly proceed from an imperfect view of any subject.

The Synod are unanimously of opinion,

I. That ‘ God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word ; or beside it in matters of faith or worship.’ Therefore they consider the rights of private judgment in all matters that regard religion as universal and unalienable. They do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time may be equal and common to all others.

II. That in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian church, or union and association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into it, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government, which Christ has appointed

pointed. That in the exercise of this right they may notwithstanding err, in making the terms of communion too lax or too narrow.

III. That our blessed Saviour hath instituted officers for the edification of his church which is his visible body, and hath appointed them not only to preach the gospel, but to exercise discipline for the preservation both of truth and duty, and that it is incumbent upon them and the whole church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous keeping in both cases to the rules laid down in the word of God.

IV. That truth is in order to goodness, and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness, according to our Saviour's rule, by their fruits ye shall know them, and that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level; and considers it of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary they are of opinion that the connexion is inseparable between faith and practice, truth and duty; and if it were otherwise, it would be of no consequence at all either to discover truth or to embrace it.

V. That while under the conviction of the above principle, they think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, and hold the essential doctrines of the gospel; they also believe that there are truths of less moment, and forms as to practice or omission of which men of the best characters and principles may differ, and in all these they think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to use mutual forbearance, and neither to judge rashly nor refuse such communion as may shew that they look upon all such as brethren who

who in the judgment of charity love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and that they believe in the unity of the catholic church.

VI. That though the character, qualifications and authority of church officers are laid down in Scripture, as well as the proper method of investiture and institution, yet the election and destination of the persons to the exercise of this authority is in the society at large.

VII. That all church power whether exercised by the body in general, or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative. That is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners. That no church court ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority. Their judgments ought to be founded upon the revealed will of God. And though it may be easily admitted that all synods and councils may err through the frailty inseparable from humanity; yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

VIII. Lastly, That if the above Scriptural and rational principles be stedfastly adhered to, the vigour and strictness of its discipline will be the glory and happiness of any church. Since it must be purely moral and spiritual in its object, and not attended with any temporal effects, it can derive no force whatever but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the church universal.

A D R A U G H T, &c.

Of the Church.

JESUS CHRIST, who is now exalted, far above all principality and power, hath erected a kingdom in this world ; which is his church.

THE universal church consists of all those persons, together with their children, who, throughout all nations, make profession of his holy religion, and submit to his laws.

BUT, as this immense multitude cannot meet to hold communion, or worship God in one place, it is reasonable, and most convenient, that they should be divided into many particular churches.

A particular church consists of a number of professing christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated together, under a certain form of government, for the purposes of divine worship, and holy living, according to the order of the sacred Scriptures.

Of the Officers of the Church.

OUR blessed LORD, at first, collected his church out of all nations ; and formed it into one body, by the mission of extraordinary ministers, stiled Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets, which officers are, long since, ceased.

THE ordinary and perpetual officers in the church

church are *bishops*, or *pastors*; the representatives of the people, usually stiled *ruling elders*, and *deacons*.

Of Bishops or Pastors.

THE first office in the church, both in dignity and usefulness, is the office of bishop, or pastor; which, in the Scripture, hath obtained different names, expressive of the various duties belonging thereto. As this officer is to preside and watch over the flock of Christ, and to inspect their spiritual interests, he is termed bishop*; as he is to feed them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor. As he is to serve Christ in his church, according to the abilities God has endued him with; to offer up the prayers of the people; and to bless the congregation, in the name of the Lord, he is termed the minister of Christ. As he is to be grave and prudent, and an example of the flock; and to govern well in the house and kingdom of Christ, he is termed presbyter, or elder. As he is the messenger of God, he is termed angel. As he is sent to declare the will of God, and to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador. And as he is to dispense the manifold grace of God, and all the ordinances of Christ's appointment, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God.

In the primitive church there seems to have been also, an order of men stiled teachers, and afterwards

* As the office and character of the gospel minister is more particularly and fully described in the Holy Scriptures under the title of bishop than any other; and as this term is peculiarly expressive of his duty, as an overseer of the flock, it is highly proper it should be retained.

afterwards catechists, distinct from the bishops, or pastors, but assistant to them in instructing the people. Their office seems to have been to explain the first elements of religion : and particularly, to take care of the education of youth, in sound principles of piety. This is an office of great importance. Hitherto, it hath been exercised in the American churches by the bishops, or pastors, alone ; arising from their poverty, and imperfect organization ; but as so many other weighty, and important duties lie upon the ministers of the gospel, it is earnestly recommended that distinct and separate officers be instituted for these objects, under the title of catechists, as soon as the state and circumstances of the church will admit.

DOCTORS and professors of theology in schools and colleges, when not invested likewise with the pastoral office, ought to be considered simply in the light of Catechists or teachers, and are not entitled by virtue of that office alone to be members of any of the judicatures of the church.

UNDER this title likewise are to be included all licentiates, and candidates for the ministry of the gospel, who are not ordained to exercise the government of the church, or to administer its sacraments.

Of Ruling Elders.

ELDERS are properly the representatives of the people ; chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline, in a more convenient manner, than might otherwise be done ; and are vested with all that authority which the assembly of believers possess over their

their own members, to rule the church, in conjunction with the bishops, or pastors. This office has been generally understood, by the greater part of the protestant, reformed churches, to be designated in the Holy Scriptures, by the titles of helps, and governments; and those who rule well; but do not labour in word and doctrine.

Of Deacons.

THE Scripture doth clearly point out deacons as distinct officers in the church, whose office is perpetual; to whom it belongs not to preach the word, or administer the sacraments: but to take special care in distributing to the necessities of the poor, the monies that may be collected by the church, from time to time, for that purpose. To them, also, as some have alledged, belongs the providing of the elements for the Lord's Supper; and assisting the other officers of the church in distributing them to the communicants. Many have thought that it also belongs to the deacons to take care of the temporalities of the church in general: and this appears to have been a part of their business in many churches, immediately after the days of the apostles. Be this as it may; inasmuch as besides the spiritual affairs of a particular church, which are to be committed to the management of its proper officers before mentioned, it must have, considered as a civil society, much important business, of a temporal nature, to transact; upon the proper management of which the promotion of religion will greatly depend: such as the erection and repairs of places of worship; the care of par-

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sonages and glebes for the accommodation and support of their bishops, or pastors; the collection and payment of salaries to their ecclesiastical officers; the institution, and superintendency of schools, for the instruction of the rising generation, not only in the principles of religion, but also in the various branches of ordinary and useful business; together with the management of funds, for defraying their annual expences, and the like; it is the duty, and we would earnestly recommend it to the attention of every particular church, to appoint committees, of the most prudent and discreet members of their society, to manage these and similar concerns, and for the more effectual accomplishing of these important ends, to endeavour to obtain charters of incorporation.

Of the Ordinances in a particular Church.

A particular church being regularly constituted with its proper officers, the ordinances established in it, by Christ the head, are, prayer, thanksgiving, and praise, the reading of the Holy Scriptures, expounding, and preaching the Word of God, catechising, administering the sacraments, collections for the poor, and other necessities of the church; and blessing the people.

Of Church Government; and the several kinds of Judicatures.

REASON and Scripture require the government of the Church to be exercised under some certain and definite form. And having consulted the Scriptures, as interpreted by the practice of the primitive Christians, whose history

tory hath come down to our times ; we believe it to be lawful and agreeable to the institutions of Christ, that the church be governed by congregational, presbyterial, and synodical assemblies. Yet so, that we embrace, in the spirit of charity, those Christians who differ from us on these subjects, in opinion, or in practice.

THESE assemblies ought not to enjoy any civil jurisdiction ; nor inflict any civil penalties ; their power is only spiritual, and declarative. They possess the right of requiring obedience to the laws of Christ ; and of excluding the disobedient, and disorderly, from the privileges of the church. To give efficiency, however, to this necessary, and scriptural authority, they possess the powers requisite for obtaining evidence, and inflicting censure. They can call before them any offender against the order and government of the church ; they can require members of their own society to appear, and give testimony on the cause ; but the highest punishment to which their authority extends, is to exclude the contumacious, and impenitent, from the congregation of believers.

Of the Congregational Assembly, or judicature, usually stiled the Church Session.

THE Church session consists of the bishop, or pastor, and elders of a particular congregation ; and are competent to the spiritual government of that congregation : for which purpose they have power to enquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members of that church ; to call before them offenders and witnesses, being members of their own society ; to admonish ; to rebuke ; or to suspend
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from the sacraments those who are found to deserve the censures of the church ; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of that congregation ; and to appoint delegates to represent them in the higher judicatures of the church. And the bishop or pastor, shall have a right to convene the session when he may judge it requisite ; and ought in all cases to convene them, when thereto requested, by any two, or more, of the elders. And every session shall keep a fair register of baptisms and marriages ; and also of persons admitted to the Lord's table ; and of deaths in the society.

THE church being divided into many separate congregations, they need mutual counsel and assistance, in order to preserve, as far as possible, in this imperfect state of human reason, soundness of doctrine, and regularity of discipline ; and to enter into common measures, for the promotion of knowledge and religion ; and for preventing the encroachments of infidelity, and error. Hence arises the necessity and usefulness of presbyterial and synodical assemblies.

Of the Presbyterial Assembly.

A Presbytery consists of all the bishops, or pastors, and one or more elders from each congregation, within a certain district. If more elders than one be delegated from a single church, they shall, however, be entitled only to one vote. Congregations, who have no settled pastors, but are in the communion of the church, shall be entitled to be represented in this assembly ; and in all deliberations, and decisions, shall enjoy an equal voice with the lay representation

representation of any settled church. Any three ministers, or bishops, and as many elders as may be present, belonging to that presbytery, being met at the time and place appointed, shall be a judicature, competent to the dispatch of business; notwithstanding the absence of the other members. Every elder not known to the presbytery, shall produce a certificate of his regular appointment, from that church which he represents.

THE presbytery hath cognizance of all things that regard the welfare of the particular churches within it's bounds, that are not cognizable by the session; and hath also a power of receiving, and issuing appeals from the sessions; and references, brought before them in an orderly manner; of examining, and licensing candidates for the gospel ministry; of ordaining, settling, removing, or judging ministers; of examining, and approving, or censuring the records of the session; of resolving questions of doctrine, or discipline, seriously and reasonably proposed; of condemning erroneous opinions, that injure the purity, or peace of the church; of visiting particular churches, to inquire into their state, and redress the evils that may have risen within them; of uniting, or dividing congregations, at the request of the people; and of ordering whatever pertains to the spiritual concerns of the churches under their care. And it shall be the duty of presbyteries, to report to the synod, censures, ordinations, dismissing, or receiving of members, and removals of members by death. They shall meet on their own adjournments, and when any emergency shall require a meeting sooner

sooner than the time to which the judicature stands adjourned, the moderator shall, with the concurrence, or at the request of two ministers, and two elders, the elders being of different congregations within the same presbytery, call a meeting of the presbytery, by a circular letter sent to every member of the judicature, and to every vacant congregation within the bounds of the judicature; and nothing shall be transacted at such *pro re nata* meeting, besides that particular business, for which the judicature has been thus convened.

At each meeting of presbytery, a sermon shall be delivered, if convenient, by the moderator of the last meeting, or some member appointed thereto; except when there are probationers, or intrants, to preach before the the presbytery.—Every particular session of the presbytery shall be opened and concluded with prayer by the moderator; the roll shall be called, and the meeting recorded by the clerk, in the following terms, “*Ubi post preces sederunt,*” or the initial letters thereof; the names of the members present shall be entered on record; a record shall also be kept of those that are absent.

Of Schools.

As it is of the greatest importance, both to learning and religion, that they should be associated under a capable and pious education; be it enjoined on every presbytery, to take the most prudent and effectual measures, to establish within their bounds, one, or more grammar schools, under learned and pious teachers, for instructing youth in the learned languages,
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and in the elements of science. That these schools may be the more subservient to religion, let it be an essential part of the master's duty to teach, and inculcate the principles of religion on the youth, at least, on part of one day in each week, and let that day, if practicable, be the Lord's-day, in order to give the greater solemnity and weight to the instructions; and to afford both pupil and teacher more opportunity to attend to them, with seriousness and advantage. Let each presbytery be careful to search for young persons of the most promising piety and talents; and use their best influence with the parents or relations of such youth, if any they have, who are capable of the expence, to afford them a liberal education, in order to their being qualified for the ministry of the gospel. If they have no parents, or relations, who are able and willing to bear the expence, let the presbytery use the most prudent and effectual means to recommend them to the charity of the congregations under their care; or to the charity of the public; and to procure for them such assistances and employments, as soon as they shall be able to discharge them, as will enable them, in the best manner, and with the least public expence, to attain a complete and liberal education. But that money, thus given in charity, may not be misplaced, or wasted, let the presbytery take such measures, as may appear to them most proper, to have it refunded; provided the persons thus educated should afterwards decline offering themselves for the work of the ministry. Of these schools, let the presbytery, at least, twice in the year, appoint visitors; who shall, at certain times to be

be fixed by themselves as most convenient, and as often besides as they, or any of them, may have it in their power, examine the state of the schools; the fidelity of the teachers; the improvement of the scholars in knowledge, and especially in the knowledge of the principles of religion; and, finally, the state of their moral government and discipline; and let these visitors prepare a report on the whole, to be entered on the records of the presbytery, and carried up to the synod. Let the report, besides other circumstances, particularly specify the number of scholars in each school; the number and names of those who are communicants; the names of those poor scholars, who may, at any time, be educated at the expence of the presbytery, with the time that they have been on the presbytery list; and the proficiency they have made—That the knowledge of these things may prompt the fidelity and diligence, both of teachers and pupils; may give the government of the church, a more certain acquaintance with the state of learning; and may suggest to them such means as may be useful for extending it, and making it subservient to religion.

Of Synodical Assemblies.

As a presbytery is a convention of several congregations with their bishops or pastors; so a synod consists of several presbyteries convened according to the order of the church.

It is expedient that the number of presbyteries which shall compose any synod shall be determined by the General Assembly or Council.

SYNODS

SYNODS have power to admit and judge of appeals, regularly brought up from the presbyteries; to give their judgment on all references, in ecclesiastical cases, made to them; to review the presbytery books; to redress whatever hath been done by presbyteries contrary to order; to take effectual care that presbyteries observe the constitutions of the church; and to make such regulations for the benefit of their whole body, and of the presbyteries and churches under their care, as shall be agreeable to the word of God, and not contradictory to the decisions of the General Council; and to propose to the general council, such measures, for their adoption, as may be of common advantage to the whole church.

Of the General Council.

THE highest judicature of the Presbyterian church, in the United States of North-America, shall be stiled a *General Council*: and shall represent, in one body, all the particular churches of that denomination.

THE general council shall consist of an equal delegation of ministers and elders, from each presbytery, in the following proportion; *viz.* each presbytery consisting of not more than six ministers, shall send one minister and one elder; each presbytery consisting of more than six ministers, and not more than twelve, shall send two ministers and two elders; and in like proportion for every six ministers, in any presbytery, and these delegates, so appointed, shall bear the title of *Commissioners to the General Council*. Of these commissioners, any fourteen,

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or more, one half of whom shall be ministers, being met on the day and at the place appointed, shall be competent to form a general council. And the judicatory, when constituted, shall bear the stile and title of the *General Council of the Presbyterian church, in North-America*.

THE general council shall review the minutes and proceedings of every synod, to approve, or censure them; and give their advice, and instructions, in all other cases submitted to them.—The council may not assume the business of a presbytery, to issue processess, or try any matter *de novo*; unless, so far, as to determine any matter of dispute, *in thesi*, submitted to them, by any synod, presbytery, or bishop. The council are farther, to constitute the bond of union, peace, correspondence, and mutual confidence, among all our churches. To the council belongs a power of determining in cases of conscience; consulting, reasoning, and judging in controversies respecting doctrine and discipline; of reproofing, warning, or bearing testimony against errors in doctrine, or immorality of practice in any church or presbytery; of corresponding with foreign churches; of putting a stop to schismatical contentions, or disputations: and, in general, of recommending and attempting reformation of manners, and promoting charity, truth and holiness, through all the churches; and of erecting new synods, when they judge it necessary.

HAVING defined the officers of the church, and the assemblies, by which it shall be governed; it is proper here to resume them in order; and prescribe the modes in which ecclesiastical
rulers

rulers shall be ordained to their respective offices; and those in which the judicatories of the church shall be constituted, and carry their powers into effectual execution.

Of licensing Candidates, or Probationers, to preach the Gospel.

It is reasonable that some trial be previously made of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the gospel; that so this holy office may not be degraded, by being conferred on weak, and unworthy men, and that the churches may have an opportunity of judging of the competency of the talents of those, by whom they are to be instructed and governed. For this purpose probationers shall be licensed to preach the gospel; that after a competent experience of their talents, and having received from the churches a good report, they may in due time be ordained to that sacred office.

It is proper and requisite, that candidates applying to the presbytery, to be licensed to preach the gospel, produce satisfactory testimonials of their good moral character; and of their being in the communion of the church; and it is proper that the presbytery, for their farther satisfaction with regard to this essential qualification for the ministry of the gospel, proceed themselves to examine the candidates, as to the operation of religion on their hearts: and the motives that influence them to seek the sacred office.—And because it is highly reproachful to religion, and dangerous to the church, to intrust the holy ministry to weak and ignorant men; the presbytery shall try their knowledge

knowledge of the Latin language; and in the original languages, in which the holy scriptures were written.—They shall examine them on the arts and sciences; on theology, natural and revealed; and on ecclesiastical history. And besides this examination held before the presbytery, it is recommended that the candidate be required to produce a diploma of Bachelor, or Master of Arts, from some college or university; or, at least, authentic testimonials of his having gone through a regular course of learning. The presbytery, in order to make trial of their talents, to explain and vindicate, and practically to enforce the doctrines of the gospel, shall require of each candidate, *an exegesis* on some common head of divinity, a homily, a presbyterial exercise, a lecture, or explication of a portion of scripture, and a popular sermon, or other similar exercises; to be held at several successive sessions; till the presbytery shall have obtained competent proof of their piety, literature, and capacity to teach in the churches. After which the presbytery shall proceed to license them to preach the gospel.

BUT that the most effectual measures may be taken to guard against insufficient men being admitted into the sacred office, it is recommended, that no candidate be licensed, unless, after his having completed the usual course of academical studies, he hath studied divinity a sufficient time, under some approved divine, or professor of theology.

WHEN the presbytery have agreed to license the candidate, the moderator shall require of him the following engagements; *viz.* Do you
sincerely

sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church, as the confession of your faith; containing that system of doctrines taught by Christ, the great head, and prophet of his church, in the holy scriptures?—Do you promise to study the peace, and purity of the church? Do you promise to submit yourself to your brethren in the Lord?—The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative to the satisfaction of the presbytery; and the moderator having offered up a prayer suitable to the occasion, he shall address himself to the candidate, to the following purpose; “ In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by that authority which he hath given to his church, for its edification, we do license you to preach the gospel, wherever God, in his providence, may call you thereto; and for this purpose, may the blessing of God rest upon you; and the Spirit of Christ fill your heart. *Amen.*” And record shall be made of the licensure.

WHEN any candidate shall, by permission of the presbytery, remove without its limits, an extract of this record, signed by the clerk, shall be his sufficient testimonial to those judicatures, under whose inspection he shall thereafter come.

*Of the Election, and Ordination of Bishops,
or Pastors.*

WHEN any probationer hath preached so much to the acceptance of any congregation, that the people appear disposed to receive him, as their bishop, or pastor, the session shall solicit the assistance and counsel of some neighbouring minister in preparing a call to him; which shall

shall be presented to the presbytery at their next meeting: on a Lord's day, immediately after public worship, it shall be intimated from the pulpit, that all free persons, members of that congregation, are requested to meet on day ensuing, at the church, or usual place for holding worship; then, and there, if it be agreeable to them to prepare a call to to be their pastor.

On the day appointed, the minister, whose assistance has been obtained, shall preach a sermon at the usual season for public worship, and, after sermon, shall announce to the people, that he will immediately proceed to take the votes of the legal electors of that congregation in the case of whether or not he shall be chosen to be their bishop, or pastor. In this election no person shall be entitled to vote, who refuses to submit to the censures of the church, regularly administered; or who does not contribute his just proportion, according to his own engagement, or that rules of the church, to all its necessary expences.—When the votes are taken, if it appear that a great proportion of the people are averse from the candidate, and cannot be induced to concur in the call; the assisting bishop shall endeavour to dissuade the congregation from farther prosecuting it. But if the people be nearly, or entirely, unanimous; or, if the majority shall insist upon their right to call a minister; then, in that case, the assistant, after using his utmost endeavours to persuade the congregation to unanimity, shall proceed to draw a call in due form, and to have it to be subscribed by the electors; certifying, at the same time, the number, and circumstances,

stances, of those who do not concur in the call; to be laid before the presbytery, together with the call.

THE call shall be in the following, or like form, *viz.* “ The congregation of being, on sufficient grounds, well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you and having good hope, from our past experience of your labors, that your ministrations in the gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call, and desire you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation: promising you, in the execution of your duty, all proper support, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord. In testimony whereof, we have hereunto respectively subscribed our names, this day of *A. D.*

Testis, A. B. moderator of the meeting.”

BUT if any congregation shall chuse to subscribe their call by their elders and deacons, or either, they shall be at liberty so to do: but, it shall in such case be fully certified to the presbytery, by the bishop who presided, that they have been appointed for this purpose, by a public vote of the congregation; and that the call has been, in all other respects, prepared as above directed.

THE call shall be accompanied with an obligation, executed in legal form, for the whole stipulated salary; in such manner, and with such securities, as shall be approved by the presbytery; that the gospel may not be discouraged, through defect of temporal support.— But in no case shall the minister be collector of his own salary: it being the indispensable duty
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of the people, to see this punctually, and faithfully done.

THE call, accompanied with such an obligation, shall be presented to the presbytery; that, if they judge it proper, they may deliver it to the licentiate. But no presbytery shall receive or present a call, where the electors seem to be equally or nearly equally divided. But if a majority appear in favour of the candidate, the presbytery shall then judge whether the minority be so considerable, or so averse from the candidate, as to render it more injurious than useful to the interest of religion to offer him the call: if in the judgment of the presbytery it would be imprudent in him to accept it, they shall not present it; and shall moreover earnestly advise him to discountenance all applications from that church in time to come, unless a better and more united temper appear among the people.—But if the presbytery agree to present the call, it shall be accordingly presented, and the presentation recorded. But in as much as the comfort and honor of the ministry greatly depends on the easy and decent provision which is made for their families after their death; and as the widows and orphans of such as have spent their lives usefully in the service of the church, ought to be objects of special care to all its pastors; it is recommended, that no presbytery shall ordain, or instal, any probationer, or ordained minister, in any congregation, until that congregation shall have engaged to contribute to the widows fund a certain yearly rate, as he shall choose, for the benefit of his family after his decease: which shall be considered as a part of the salary that they shall have promised to pay him.

LET no man receive a call but by the presentation of the presbytery: for the settling of a bishop, or pastor, being an affair of the highest moment to the church, ought to be wholly under the direction of those who are most able to order it with wisdom and prudence.

If the call be to the licentiate of another presbytery, in that case the commissioners deputed from the congregation to prosecute the call shall produce to that judicature a certificate from their own presbytery, regularly attested by the moderator and clerk, that they are in order.—If that presbytery present the call to their licentiate, and he be disposed to accept it, they shall then dismiss him from their jurisdiction, and require him to repair to that presbytery into the bounds of which he is called; and there to submit himself to the usual trials preparatory to ordination.—Trials for ordination, especially in a different presbytery from that in which the candidate was licensed, shall consist of a careful examination on the subjects of philosophy, theology, ecclesiastical history, the Greek and Hebrew languages; and such other branches of literature as to the presbytery may appear requisite; an examination on the constitution, the rules and principles of the government and discipline of the church; and such written discourses, founded on the word of God, as to the presbytery shall seem proper.—The presbytery, being fully satisfied with regard to his knowledge of the holy scriptures; and his qualifications for the sacred office, shall appoint a convenient day for his ordination, which ought to be held, if convenient, in that church of which he is to be the bishop, or pastor.

THE day appointed for the ordination being arrived, and the presbytery convened, some member of the presbytery, previously appointed to that duty, shall preach a sermon adapted to the occasion.—The same, or another member appointed to preside in this business, shall afterwards briefly recite from the pulpit, in the audience of the people, the proceedings of the presbytery preparatory to this transaction. He shall point out the nature and importance of the ordinance; and endeavour to impress the audience with a sense of the solemnity of the transaction.—Then addressing himself to the candidate, he shall propose to him the following questions—1. Do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the doctrines therein contained, to be the word of God? 2. Do you here, publicly renew your acceptance of the Confession of Faith of this church, as a useful summary, and explanation, of the practical principles of faith contained in the holy scriptures? 3. Do you promise subjection to the government and discipline of the Presbyterian church, as exercised in these United States?—4. Have you been induced to seek the office of the holy ministry through a pure love to God, and a sincere desire to promote his glory, in the gospel of his Son?—5. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel; and the purity and peace of the church; whatever persecution, or opposition, may arise unto you on that account?—6. Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private, and personal duties, which become you, as a christian, and a minister of the gospel; as well as in all relative duties,
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and the public duties of your office; endeavouring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your conversation; and walking with exemplary piety, before the flock, over which God shall make you * OVERSEER?—The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, the moderator shall demand of the people; 1. Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive whom you have called, to be your bishop, or pastor?—2. Do you promise to receive the words of truth from his mouth, with meekness and love; and to submit to him with humility, in the due exercise of discipline?—3. Do you promise to encourage him in his arduous labor; and to assist his endeavours for your instruction, and spiritual edification?—4. And do you engage to continue to him, while he is your bishop, or pastor, that competent worldly maintenance which you have proposed; and whatever else you may see needful, for the honor of religion, and his comfort among you?—The people having answered these questions in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands; the candidate shall kneel down, in the most convenient part of the church; in which posture, the moderator shall, by prayer, and with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, according to the apostolic example, solemnly consecrate him to the holy office of the gospel ministry.—Prayer being ended, he shall rise from his knees; and the minister who presides shall first, and afterwards all the members of the presbytery, in their order, take him by the right hand, saying in words to this

* Επισκοπος, bishop.

this purpose, “ We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part of this ministry with us.”—After which, the minister presiding, or some other, appointed for the purpose, shall give a solemn charge, in the name of God, to the newly ordained bishop, and to the people, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties; and shall then, by prayer, recommend them both to the grace of God, and his holy keeping; and, finally, dismiss the congregation, with the usual blessing. And the presbytery shall duly record the transaction.

Of Instalment, distinct from Ordination.

WHEN a bishop or pastor, who has been already ordained, is to be settled in a congregation, the instalment, which consists in constituting a pastoral relation between him and the people of that particular church, may be performed, either by the presbytery, or by a committee appointed for that purpose; as may appear most expedient; and the following order shall be observed therein.

A day shall be appointed for the instalment, at such time as may appear most convenient; and due notice thereof given to the congregation.

WHEN the presbytery, or committee, shall be convened, and constituted, on the day appointed, a sermon shall be delivered, by some one of the members, previously appointed thereto; immediately after which, the bishop, or pastor, who is to preside, shall state to the congregation the design of their meeting; and briefly recite the proceedings of the presbytery relative thereto. And then addressing himself

to the bishop, or pastor, to be installed, shall propose to him the following, or similar questions, *viz.*

1. Are you now willing to take the charge of this congregation, as their bishop and pastor, agreeably to your declaration at accepting their call? 2. Do you conscientiously believe and declare, that in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God, and the good of his church? 3. Do you solemnly promise, that, by the grace of God assisting you, you will faithfully endeavour to discharge all the duties of a bishop and pastor to this congregation; and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming a minister of the gospel of Christ, agreeably to your ordination engagements?—To all which having received satisfactory answers, he shall propose to the people the same, or similar questions, as those directed under the head of ordination, which having been also satisfactorily answered, by holding up their right hands, in testimony of assent, he shall solemnly pronounce and declare the said minister to be regularly constituted the bishop and pastor of that congregation.—A charge shall then be given to both parties, as directed in the affair of ordination; and, after prayer, and singing part of a psalm adapted to the transaction, the congregation shall be dismissed with the usual benediction.

It is highly becoming, that after the congregation is dismissed, the heads of families of that congregation who are then present, or at least the elders, and those appointed to take care of the temporal concerns of that church, should come forward to their bishop and pastor, and

and give him the right hand of cordial reception, and affectionate regard.

Of Translation, or removing a Minister from one Charge to another.

No bishop shall translate himself from one church to another; nor receive any call for that purpose, but through the hands of the presbytery.

Any church desiring to call a settled minister from his present charge, shall, by commissioners properly authorized, represent to the presbytery the ground on which they plead his removal. The presbytery, having maturely considered their plea, may, according as it appears more or less reasonable, either recommend to them to desist from prosecuting the call, or may order it to be delivered to the minister to whom it is addressed, together with a written citation to him and his congregation to appear before the presbytery at its next meeting. This citation shall be read from the pulpit in that church, by a member of the presbytery appointed for that purpose, immediately after public worship; so that at least two Sabbaths shall intervene between the citation and the meeting of the presbytery at which the cause of translation is to be considered.—The presbytery being met, and having heard the parties, shall, upon the whole view of the case, either continue him in his former charge, or translate him, as they shall deem to be most for the peace and edification of the church, or refer the whole affair to the synod at their next meeting, for their advice and direction, as they shall think prudent.

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WHEN the congregation calling any settled minister lies within the limits of another presbytery, that congregation shall obtain leave from the presbytery to which they belong, to apply to the presbytery of which he is a member; and that presbytery, having cited him and his congregation as before directed, shall proceed to hear and issue the cause. If they agree to the translation, they shall release him from his present charge, and, having given him proper testimonials, shall require him to repair to that presbytery within the bounds of which the congregation calling him lies, that the proper steps may be taken for his regular settlement in that congregation; and the presbytery to which the congregation belongs, having received an authenticated certificate of his release, under the hand of the clerk of that presbytery, shall proceed to instal him in the congregation, as soon as convenient.—*Provided always*, that no bishop, or pastor, shall be translated, without his own consent previously obtained.

IN every translation, an obligation for maintenance shall accompany the call, in the same manner as in the settlement of a minister newly ordained.

Of resigning a Pastoral Charge.

WHEN any bishop shall labor under such grievances in his congregation, as that he shall desire leave to resign his pastoral charge of that church, the presbytery shall cite that congregation to appear before them, by their commissioners, at their next meeting, to shew cause, if
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any they have, why the presbytery should not accept the resignation. If the congregation fails to appear; or if their reasons for retaining their pastor be deemed by the presbytery not sufficient,—he shall have leave granted to resign his pastoral charge of that church: of which due record shall be made; and that church shall be held to be vacant, till supplied again, in an orderly manner, with another bishop.—And if any congregation shall desire to be released from their pastor, a similar process, *mutatis mutandis*, shall be observed.

Of Missions.

WHEN vacancies become so numerous in any presbytery that they cannot be supplied with the frequent administration of the word and ordinances, it shall be proper for such presbytery, or any vacant congregation within their bounds, with the leave of the presbytery; to apply to any other presbytery; or to any synod; or to the general convention; for such assistance as they can afford.—And the general council may, of their own knowledge, send missions to any part, to plant churches; or to supply vacancies: and, for this purpose, may direct any presbytery to ordain bishops or pastors, without relation to particular churches. Provided always, that such missions be made with the consent of the parties appointed thereto; and that the judicature sending them, make the necessary provision for their support and reward in the performance of this service.

Of Moderators.

It is equally necessary in the judicatures of the church, as in other assemblies, that there should be a moderator, or president, that the business may be conducted with order and dispatch.

THE moderator is to be considered as possessing, by delegation from the whole body, all authority necessary for the preservation of order ; for convening and adjourning the judicature ; and directing its operations according to the rules of the church. He is to propose to the judicature every subject of deliberation, that comes before them. He may propose what appears to him the most regular and speedy way of bringing any business to issue. He shall prevent the members from interrupting each other ; and require them, in speaking, always to address the chair. He shall prevent a speaker from deviating from the subject ; and from using personal reflections. He shall silence those who refuse to obey order. He shall prevent members who attempt to depart from the judicature without leave obtained from him. He shall, at a proper season, when the deliberations are ended, put the question, and call the votes : if the judicature be equally divided, he shall possess the casting vote. If he be not willing to decide, he shall put the question a second time ; and if the judicature be again equally divided, and he decline to give his vote, the question shall be lost. In all questions, he shall give a concise and clear state of the object of the vote ; and then say, All you
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who are of opinion that this question shall pass in the affirmative, say "Aye,"—he shall then proceed, All you who are of a contrary opinion, say "No." He shall then declare on which side the majority appears to be. But if any member, not satisfied with his decision, chuse to call a vote by the roll, then the moderator shall require the clerk, or clerks, to call over the whole names in the roll of the judicature; marking, with his pen, each vote as it is given: and the question shall be decided as above, by the majority of votes; or, in case of an equal division, by the moderator. The moderator shall likewise be empowered, on any extraordinary emergency, to convene the judicature by his circular letter, before the ordinary time of meeting: but he shall obtain, for this purpose, the concurrence of as many of his brethren as the urgency of the occasion will permit him to consult.

THE bishop of the congregation shall always be the moderator of the church session; except when, for prudential reasons, it may appear adviseable that some other bishop should be invited to preside; in which case the bishop may, with the concurrence of the session, invite such other bishop as they may see meet, belonging to the same presbytery, to preside in that affair. In this judicature, therefore, the moderator is continual; but, in the vacancy of any church, the moderator shall be the bishop, or pastor, sent to them by the presbytery; or invited by the session to preside on a particular occasion. In congregations where there are colleagues, they shall, when present, alternately preside in the session.—The moderator of the presbytery

tery shall be chosen from year to year; or at every meeting of the presbytery, as the presbytery may think best.—The moderator of the synod, and of the general council, shall be chosen at each meeting of those judicatures; and the last moderator present shall open the meeting with a sermon; and shall hold the chair till a new moderator be chosen: and the last moderator living, shall have the power of convening them on extraordinary emergencies.

Of Privilege.

It shall be the privilege of any member of a judicature to speak in his proper order to any question, by leave from the moderator. The moderator shall give leave to the person who first rises: but if two or more members are judged to have risen at the same time, the moderator shall determine which shall speak first.—Any member shall have a right to propose any question relative to the business of the church, and the interests of religion; and to have it put to vote, provided only, that his motion be seconded by another member. If any member conceive his privileges to be unjustly controuled by the moderator, he may appeal to the judicature, who shall determine the point of privilege by a vote; and the moderator and member must submit to the suffrage of the judicature.

Of Clerks.

EVERY judicature shall chuse a clerk to record their transactions; whose continuance shall be

during pleasure. It shall be the duty of the clerk, besides recording the transactions, to preserve them carefully; and to grant extracts from them, whenever properly required: and such extracts, under the hand of the clerk, are to be considered authentic vouchers in any ecclesiastical judicature; and to every part of the church; of the fact which they declare.

Of vacant Congregations assembling for Public Worship.

CONSIDERING that the number of our congregations is so greatly superior to the number of bishops who are to supply them; and that this disproportion is daily increasing in the extended, and growing settlements on the frontier: and considering the great importance of weekly assembling the people, for the public worship of God, in order thereby to improve their knowledge; to confirm their habits of worship, and their desire of the public ordinances; to augment their reverence of the Deity; and to promote the charitable affections that unite men most firmly in society, it is recommended to every vacant congregation to meet together every Lord's-day, at one or more places, for the purpose of prayer, and praises, and reading the holy scriptures, together with the works of such approved divines as the presbytery, within whose bounds they are, may recommend, and they may be able to procure; and that the elders shall be the persons who shall preside, and select the portions of scripture, and of the other books to be read, and to see that the whole be conducted in a becoming and orderly manner.

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Of Commissioners to the General Council.

THE commissioners to the general council shall always be appointed by the presbytery, from which they come, at its last stated meeting immediately preceding the meeting of the general council; provided, that there be a sufficient interval between that time and the meeting of the council, for the commissioners to attend their duty in due season. Otherwise, the presbytery may make the appointment, at any stated meeting, not more than seven months preceding the meeting of the council.—And, as much as possible to prevent all failure in the representation of the presbyteries, arising from unforeseen accidents to those first appointed, it may be expedient for each presbytery, in the room of each commissioner, to appoint also an alternate commissioner, to supply his place, in case of necessary absence.

EACH commissioner, before his name shall be enrolled, as a member of the council, shall produce from his presbytery, a commission, under the hand of the clerk, or moderator, in the following, or such like form, *viz.* “ The presbytery of _____ being met at _____ on the _____ day of _____ doth hereby appoint _____ bishop of the congregation of _____ [or _____ ruling elder in the congregation of _____, as the case may be];” (to which the presbytery may, if they think proper, make a substitution, in the following form, “ or in case of his absence, then _____ bishop of the congregation of _____ [or _____ ruling elder in the congregation of _____, as the case may be]; to be a commissioner, on behalf _____

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behalf of this presbytery, to the next general council of the presbyterian church in North America, to meet at _____ on the day of _____ A. D. _____ or wherever, and whenever the said council may happen to sit, to consult, vote, and determine on all things that may come before that body, according to the principles and constitutions of this church, and the word of God. And of his diligence herein, he is to render an account at his return.

Signed, by order of the presbytery,
Moderator,
Clerk."

And the presbytery shall make record of the appointment.

THESE commissions shall, if possible, be delivered in to the clerk of the council in proper season, for him to have the rolls of the council completed before the first session. Commissions, not delivered in at that time, shall afterwards be delivered only in the intervals between the sessions.—Every regular bishop, or elder, of the church, shall have right to deliberate in the council: but none shall be entitled to vote until their names have been enrolled by the clerk; and their commissions publicly read, and filed among the papers of the council.

THE general council shall meet, at least once in every year, on the _____ Tuesday of _____ and, afterwards, on their own adjournments. If there be not a sufficient number for the transaction of business convened before 12 o'clock, on that day, those who are present shall have power to adjourn from day to day, till a sufficient number shall have met to constitute a council.

On the day to which the general council stands adjourned

adjourned, and between the hours of eleven and twelve, the moderator of the last general council, if present, or, in case of his absence, the senior bishop or pastor, present, shall open the meeting with a sermon.—After sermon, the members being in the house, where the council is to hold it's sessions, the same bishop, or pastor, who preached, shall, by prayer, publicly implore the blessing and direction of Almighty God; and shall continue to preside, till a new moderator be chosen. For this purpose, he shall call for the commissions of those present; which being read, and the names of the members being enrolled by the clerk, in order, a moderator shall be chosen.

EACH session of the council, as of all the other judicatures of the church, shall be introduced, and concluded with prayer. And the whole business of the council being concluded; and the vote being taken for dissolving the present council, the moderator shall say, from the chair.—“ By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the church, let this general council be dissolved; and I do hereby dissolve it; and require another council, chosen in the same manner, to meet at on the day of A. D. .” After which, he shall pray, and return thanks to God for his great mercy and goodness; and pronounce, on those present, the gospel benediction.

Of defraying Expences.

THE expences of bishops, or pastors, and elders, in their attendance on presbyteries and synods, shall be defrayed by the congregations, which they respectively represent. And it shall be

be the duty of the session, and those who have charge of the temporal concerns of the congregation, to find means, and to make the necessary provision for them, in due season, before the meetings of those judicatures. And the expences of the commissioners, who shall attend at the general council, shall be defrayed by the presbyteries which they shall respectively represent; who shall make provision accordingly for that purpose, in such manner as may to each presbytery appear most convenient.

Forms of Process in Presbyterial Judicatures.

WITH regard to scandals, or offences that may arise in our churches, we agree to observe the following rules of proceeding, *viz.*

1. **NOTHING** shall be admitted as a ground of censure, but what appears, by the word of God, to be of a flagrant nature; not such human infirmities as christians ought to cover with a mantle of love.

2. No complaint, or information, shall be admitted, unless private admonition hath been previously tried; except in cases of public notoriety. Because the unnecessary spreading of scandal hardens and enrages the guilty, grieves the godly, and dishonors religion.

3. **WHEN** any complaint is made of a crime cognizable before any judicature, no more shall be done at the first meeting, unless by consent of parties, than to give the accused a copy of each charge, and the names of the witnesses to support it; with a citation of all concerned to

to appear at the next meeting of the judicature, to have the matter fully heard, and decided.—Notice shall be given to the parties concerned, at least ten days previously to the meeting of the judicature.

4. THE judicature, in many cases, may find it more for edification to send some members, in a private manner, to converse with the accused person; and if he confesses guilt, to endeavour to bring him to repentance; than to proceed immediately to citation.

5. WHEN an accused person, or a witness, refuses to obey the citation, he shall be cited a second and a third time; and if he still continues to refuse, he shall be excluded from the communion of the church, for his contumacy, until he repent.

6. A single witness to any charge, and a witness interested in the issue, are never to be admitted; nor may a malicious witness, when it clearly appears to the judicature.—But in doubtful cases, a witness may be allowed to clear himself of malice, bribe, or view of interest, by a solemn oath.

7. THE oath to be administered to a witness shall be in the following, or like terms; “ You solemnly promise, in the presence of the omniscient, and heart-searching God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge, in the matter in which you are called to witness, as you shall answer it to the great judge of quick and dead.” And shall be taken by the witness, with his right hand lifted up.

8. THE trial shall be open, fair, and impartial; and the witnesses shall be examined in the presence of the accused: who shall be permitted

to ask any questions tending to his own exculpation.

9. THE testimony given by the witnesses must be faithfully recorded; and read to them for their approbation, or subscription; and the times, places, and circumstances should be ascertained, if possible; that the accused may have an opportunity to prove an *alibi*; or to extenuate, or alleviate his crime.

10. WITNESSES must not be interrupted, or confounded; but treated with christian prudence and tenderness.

11. THE moderator shall permit only one to speak at once; and preserve decorum. "Let all things be done decently."

12. WHEN all parties, and their witnesses, are heard, the judicature shall, after mature deliberation, form and declare their judgment.

13. THE judgment shall be regularly entered on the records of the judicature; and the parties shall be allowed copies of the judgment, if they demand them.

14. ALL penances, or punishments, for offences and scandals, having been introduced in times of gross superstition, shall have no place in our American churches: the guilty person shall be admonished, or rebuked, or excluded from church privileges, as the case shall appear to deserve, and this only until he give satisfactory evidence of repentance.

15. THE sentence shall be published in the church, or churches, only which have been offended; or if it be a matter less important, and it shall appear most for edification not to publish it, it may pass only among the bishops and elders.

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16. Such gross offenders as will not be reclaimed by the private or public admonitions of the church, are to be cut off from its communion, agreeably to our Lord's direction, Matt. xviii. 17. and the apostolic injunction respecting the incestuous person, 1 Cor. v. 1,—5. —But as this sentence is the highest that is inflicted by the church, and is of the most solemn nature, it is not to be pronounced without the advice and consent of, at least, the presbytery, under whose care the particular church is, to which the offender belongs; or the advice of a higher judicature, as the case may appear to require.

17. ALL processes in cases of scandals, shall commence within the space of one year, after they become known to the officers of the church; after which, the judicature shall not receive any complaint on that subject.

18. ALL processes against church members, who are not bishops, elders, or deacons, shall be finally determined by the presbytery, without any appeal to an higher judicature; unless to determine on any exception made to the mode of trial; which being determined by the synod, if in favor of the appellant, the synod may add some members to the presbytery, to review the judgment; which shall then be final.

19. WHEN any member shall remove from one church to another, he shall produce proper testimonials of his church-membership, before he be admitted to church privileges: unless the church, to which he removes, has other satisfactory means of information.

Of Procefs against a Bishop, or Pastor.

As the success of the gospel, in a great measure, depends on the credit and good report of its ministers; each presbytery ought, with the greatest attention, to watch over all their members; and be careful to censure them, when necessary, with impartiality; either for personal crimes, which they may commit in common with other men; or those that are vocational, arising from the manner in which they may discharge their important office.

1. THE process against a gospel minister must be by accusers and witnesses of his own congregation, or of the vicinity, who shall be his prosecutors before the presbytery, his peers, by whom only he is to be tried; unless when common fame so loudly proclaims the scandal, that the presbytery find it necessary to prosecute, and search into the matter, for the honor of religion.

2. THE apostolic direction must always be attended to, *viz.* not to receive an accusation against an elder, (*i. e.* a pastor, or ruler in the church) unless it be confirmed by two or three witnesses.

3. Before a presbytery cite a gospel minister, they must enquire whether the previous steps, directed in the 18th chapter of Matthew, have been taken, and also, whether the crime alleged be, by the laws of God, worthy of the censures of the church.

4. WHEN complaint is laid before the presbytery it must be reduced to writing; and nothing farther be done, at the first meeting, unless
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by consent of parties, than giving the minister a full copy of the charges against him, with two witnesses, at least, annexed to each charge; and citing all parties, and their witnesses, to appear and be heard at the next meeting.

5. THE prosecutor must be previously warned, that if he fails to prove the charges, he must himself be censured, as a slanderer of the holy ministry.

6. It is the duty of all christians to be very cautious in taking up an ill report of any man, but especially of a gospel minister; as the success of religion greatly depends on their character of soundness in the faith, and holy, and exemplary conversation. If, therefore, any man know a minister guilty of a private censurable fault, he should warn him in private, but if he persists in it, or it becomes public, he should apply to some other bishop of his presbytery, for his advice in the matter.

7. If it is found necessary to enter a process against any gospel minister, the presbytery shall cite him, giving a full copy of the charges, together with the witnesses names: and time, at least ten days, to prepare his witnesses and defence.

8. At the next meeting of the presbytery the charges must be read to him; and his answers heard and recorded, to determine the importance of the complaint.

9. If it appear necessary to proceed farther, the presbytery ought to labor to bring him to confession.

10. If he confess, and the matter is base and flagitious, as drunkenness, uncleanness, &c. however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction

tion of all, the presbytery must, without delay, depose him from office; and appoint him a due time to confess publicly before the congregation offended, and profess his repentance.

11. If a minister accused of atrocious crimes, being three times duly cited, shall refuse to attend the presbytery, he must be immediately suspended.

12. If the minister, when he appears, will not confess, but denies the facts; if on hearing the witnesses, the charges appear important, and well supported, the presbytery must, nevertheless, censure him, and suspend, or depose him, according to the nature of the offence.

13. If the charges be of false doctrine, and unsoundness in the faith, the memories of witnesses cannot be much depended on; the original notes of his sermons are better evidence. A *lapsus linguae* is not a sufficient ground of charge; the understanding, and memories of witnesses, are carefully to be attended to. Errors too must be considered; whether they strike at the vitals of religion, and are industriously spread; or whether they arise from the weakness of the human understanding, and are not likely to do much hurt.—He should be treated with christian and brotherly tenderness, admonitions and frequent conferences; but in some more dangerous cases, suspension becomes necessary: but a synod should be consulted in such cases.

14. If the presbytery find, on trial, that the matter complained of amounts to no more than such acts of infirmity as may be amended, and the people satisfied, so as little or nothing remains

mains to hinder his usefulness; they shall take all prudent measures to remove the offence.

15. A minister deposed for scandalous conduct, may not be restored on his deepest sorrow for sin, without some time of eminent, and exemplary, humble and edifying conversation, to heal the wound made by his scandal.

16. As soon as a minister is deposed, his congregation shall be declared vacant.