

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST BOOK OF DISCIPLINE; OR,
THE BOOKE OF THE POLICIE OF THE CHURCH.

I REGARD the First Book of Discipline as, in several respects, the most thoughtful, judicious, practical, and comprehensive of the documents connected with the organisation of the Reformed Church of Scotland. It was drawn up by the same six men¹ who were subsequently entrusted with the preparation of the Confession of Faith; and it has been said that they first settled the titles of the several chapters, and then apportioned the preparation of so many of them to each. But this is matter of pure conjecture. The portion on the universities, from the multitude of its practical details, we cannot but assign mainly to Douglas, the Principal of St Mary's College, and Wynram, the sub-prior of

¹ [The six were John Wynram, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Douglas, John Row, and John Knox (*supra*, p. 99).]

the Augustinian Monastery at St Andrews. One can hardly doubt that the rest, if not actually drafted by Knox, was carefully remoulded by him; and it bears evidence of acquaintance with books which were far more likely to have been known to him than to any of the others—as Herman of Cologne's Book of the Reformation, Latin versions of some of the earlier Kirchenbücher or Kirchenordnungen of the German Protestants, and probably of the famous Ordinances of Calvin, as drafted at Geneva after his return from exile.

I. The Government of the Church.

The opinions of our reformer and his associates respecting the government and discipline of the church are gathered partly from the opening chapters of the Book of Common Order, but mainly from the treatise ultimately entitled the First Book of Discipline. I believe that a careful study of these will lead to a pretty definite conclusion as to what these opinions actually were, and to a pretty decided conviction that, like their opinions respecting matters of doctrine and ritual, they were substantially in harmony with those to which the Scottish nation has been so long and firmly attached. It may be admitted that there were some of Knox's associates who, whatever

may have been their own private sentiments, would, on grounds of expediency, have been contented to retain the former hierarchical government of the church; and if on such a point any weight is to be allowed to the assertions of Spottiswoode,¹ the popish Archbishop of St Andrews might possibly in that case not have refused to follow the course taken for a time by his relatives in St Mary's College, and to remain at his post at the head of the reformed church. But from the disastrous issue of the compromise in their case, as well as from what is known and indisputable of his own history and character, there is no reason to suppose that anything was lost, but on the contrary that incalculable gain accrued to the reformed church from this temptation not being put in his way. It was long maintained by the leaders of the Scottish episcopalians that Knox himself, to a certain extent, yielded to the wishes of his less thoroughgoing associates, and was implicated with them in certain attempts to continue or restore the semblance of a hierarchy in the new church. In fact, some of them went so far as to assert that it was not till after his death that controversy arose as to whether the episcopal or presbyterian form of government was the more primitive and scriptural. These views, if I

¹ Spottiswoode's History, Spot. Soc. ed., i. 371, 372.

understand rightly, are now abandoned by their ablest men; and it was full time that they should be so. The works of Whitgift, which have been republished in our own day and made more generally accessible, clearly show that the controversy about the presbyterian government of the church had been formally raised even in England at least as early as 1568; while the Later Helvetic Confession, approved by the Church of Scotland in 1566 at the request of Knox himself,¹ as clearly shows that the principles on which the controversy fell to be decided had been generally adopted by the followers of Calvin even at an earlier date. These principles were: First, that the names of bishop and presbyter are in Scripture used indiscriminately to denote the holder of the same office; second, that the only office-bearers of permanent divine appointment in the church are the pastor, the doctor, the elder, and the deacon. In fact, at the head of Calvin's *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques*, drawn up, if not printed, as early as 1541, we find the following: "Il y a quatre ordres d'offices que notre Seigneur a institue pour le gouvernement de son eglise, premierement les pasteurs, puis les docteurs, apres les anciens, quaterement les diacres," which passed substantially into the Book of Common Order in 1556.

¹ *Supra*, pp. 112, 113.

This being the case, we are not guilty of any anachronism in attributing substantially presbyterian opinions to our reformer, even if we have to grant that the particular church court first known as the greater eldership or presbytery, and now exclusively enjoying the title of presbytery, existed at that time only in a rudimentary form.

The Book of Common Order of 1556 is the earliest authentic document casting light on the opinions of our reformers respecting the government and discipline of the church. The introductory part of the book treats at length of the permanent office-bearers of the church, the manner of their election, the duties of their respective offices, and the assemblies they were to hold in common for government and discipline. The enumeration of the office-bearers and the description of their duties is quite in harmony with what the Books of Discipline subsequently laid down. The office-bearers recognised are the minister, the elder, the deacon, and the doctor; and the duties assigned to each are such as have generally been allotted to these functionaries in the presbyterian churches. The terms in which the last-named of them is referred to are specially deserving of notice. They effectually close a loophole, that might otherwise have been imagined to be left,

for the introduction of either bishop or superintendent as an essential and ordinary office-bearer in the church on the pretext that, even if he were so, he could be of little use in the single English congregation at Geneva.¹ "Wee are not ignorant," it is said, "that the Scriptures make mention of a fourth kind of ministers left to the church of Christ, which also are verie profitable where time and place doth permit; but for lack of opportunity in this our dispersion and exile we cannot well have the use thereof, and would to God it were not neglected where better occasion serveth. These ministers are called teachers or doctors, whose office is to instruct and teach the faithfull in sounde doctrine, providing with all diligence that the puritie of the Gospel be not corrupt either through ignorance or evill opinions."² Now, can it be supposed that Knox would have said all this of the doctor and not a word of the superintendent, if he had deemed both to be of like permanence and necessity in the church of Christ; or that he would have devoted several pages to explain the duties of the office-bearers, and their assem-

¹ The appointment of such an official as chief minister of the English congregation of Frankfort had, however, been urged by Knox's opponents there, but was refused by his party (*Discourse of Troubles at Frankfort*, pp. xiv, xlvii, cxvii, cxxxv-cxxxviii, cxlvi, cxlvii).

² *Dunlop's Confessions*, ii. 409, 410; *Laing's Knox*, iv. 177.

blies for the interpretation of the Scriptures and the administration of discipline, and not have uttered one word about the bishop, had he believed that that official was the chief or even an essential minister of the church? Can it be supposed likely that he would have been so silent, even if there had been no bishop, as confessedly there was no doctor, among the English in Geneva; or possible that he could have been so with Miles Coverdale,¹ a regularly consecrated bishop attending on his ministrations and acting as an elder in his congregation, unless he had regarded (and wished it to be known that he regarded) the simple presbyter as *jure divino* on a level with the diocesan bishop, to say nothing of the fact that his party at Frankfort had refused to have a bishop or superintendent over their congregation?

This examination of the introductory chapters of the Book of Common Order will enable us the better to understand and explain the parts of the Book of Discipline drawn up in 1560 re-

¹ The great services Coverdale had rendered to the cause of Protestantism by his translation of the Scriptures did not suffice to blot out from the minds of Elizabeth and her ministers the remembrance of his connection with Knox and Goodman. He was welcomed at the consecration of Archbishop Parker, though he came in his black gown, for they could not well do that without him; but all Grindal's efforts failed to secure for him a Welsh bishopric, or even to get him left unmolested in the parochial benefice he conferred on him.

specting the ministers and office-bearers of the church. Even the ordinary ministers of the church must all be well qualified to preach the gospel of salvation, as many of the common people were unable to read,¹ and could only be saturated with its teaching by the living voice of the preacher who, by sermons and catechising on the Lord's day, and in the towns also by the sermon during the week, was to his utmost to carry home the truth to their hearts. Our reformers judged it necessary "that His Gospell be truely and openly preached in every church and assembly of this realme";² that no one "unable to edifie the church by wholesome doctrine" should be promoted to or retained in ecclesiastic administration;³ and held that the sacraments cannot be "rightlie ministred by him in whose mouth God hath put no sermon of exhortation."⁴ Instead of entrusting parishes, as was so often done in England, to men able only to read homilies prepared by others, they affirmed that it was alike to have no minister at all and to have an idol in place of a true minister, yea, in some cases it was

¹ Even in St Andrews, with all its equipment of schools and colleges, the common people are represented in 1547 as welcoming Knox's offer of a public disputation, because though they could not all read his papers they could understand what he addressed to them *vivâ voce* (Laing's Knox, i. 189).

² Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 518; Laing's Knox, ii. 185.

³ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 526; Laing's Knox, ii. 191.

⁴ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 530; Laing's Knox, ii. 194.

worse.¹ Men of best knowledge of God's Word and cleanest life were to be nominated annually for election as elders and deacons.² The former were to assist the minister in all affairs of the kirk, to hold meetings with him for judging of causes, admonishing evil livers, yea, to take heed to the life, manners, diligence, and study of the ministers, as well as of the flock.³ The deacons were to assist in judgment, but chiefly to collect and distribute what was provided for the poor. They might also, as in the French Church, be admitted to read the Scriptures and common prayers in the congregation if required and qualified to do so.⁴ Besides ministers, elders, and deacons, generally recognised in the reformed churches as holding offices of divine institution, and being of "the ministry" or consistory of the church, certain other functionaries are mentioned in this Book of Discipline, to whom special duties are assigned, at least for a time. These are the readers, or exhorters, and the superintendents, and both classes appear to be spoken of in such a way as to make it clear that they were not to be permanently retained as orders of office-bearers in the church distinct from those above named.

¹ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 530; Laing's Knox, ii. 194.

² Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 577; Laing's Knox, ii. 233.

³ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 578; Laing's Knox, ii. 234, 235.

⁴ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 581; Laing's Knox, ii. 236, 237.

Readers, or exhorters, were to be provided for those churches which could not presently be supplied with ministers. These readers were to be men judged most apt distinctly to read the common prayers and the Scriptures, but they were to be encouraged and urged so to exercise their gifts that they might grow in knowledge and utterance, and in time might come to be entrusted with the power of preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, and discharging all the functions of the ordinary pastor.¹ Special provision was made for the spiritual improvement of these readers or exhorters in those weekly meetings for the interpretation of Scripture which, originally introduced among the exiles at Frankfort and Geneva, were after their return set up by them in England under the name of prophesying, and in Scotland under the name of the exercise.²

The portion of the book relating to the superintendents opens with a statement of the reasons which had led its framers "to make difference betwixt preachers *at this time*."³ These last

¹ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 532; Laing's Knox, ii. 195, 196. [Readers who were able to *exhort* and explain the Scriptures were to have their stipends augmented until they attained the honour of a minister (Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 536, 537; Laing's Knox, ii. 199, 200).]

² [The readers who had "any gift of interpretation" were to take part in these meetings (Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 590; Laing's Knox, ii. 244).]

³ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 539; Laing's Knox, ii. 202.

words, as has often been remarked, would have been unmeaning had they regarded the superintendent's office as by divine institution permanent in the church and superior to that of the ordinary minister. Accordingly, when they proceed to state in detail the reasons which induced them to sanction such a difference, these are found to be—not, as in the Anglican Ordinal, that there have always been in the church of Christ distinct orders of bishops and presbyters,¹ nor even as in Alasco's book that such offices were in some sort necessary, though, save in matters executive, in no way superior to their brethren the ordinary ministers of the church, but—that the dearth of qualified preachers or ministers at that time in Scotland was so great, that if each were to be settled in a single town or parish, and allowed to make continual residence therein, the larger part of the realm would be left altogether destitute of that efficient spiritual instruction, oversight, and training which the people themselves eagerly longed for, and the reformed leaders earnestly desired to provide for them. To meet this emergency, without being obliged to avail themselves so generally and unrestrictedly

¹ [“It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles' time there hath been these orders of ministers in Christ's church: bishops, priests, and deacons” (Liturgies of Edward VI., Parker Society, p. 331).]

as the English had done of the former popish incumbents, they deemed it most expedient that these should, for a time at least, be restricted to the humbler duties of readers; and that from the whole number of godly and learned men then in the realm ten or twelve should be selected, and one of them assigned to each of the proposed provinces, which he should visit annually through its whole extent, preaching from time to time in every parish not provided with an ordained and preaching minister, seeing to the administration of the sacraments and of church discipline in such parishes, and presiding at the meetings of the provincial synod, and at the examination and admission of ministers and readers appointed to serve at the churches.

It used to be maintained by Scottish episcopalians, and has been reiterated even in our own day, that there is hardly any difference to be discerned between these superintendents and the old bishops save the substitution of a name which is bad Latin for one which is good Greek. This is more smart than true. The following very material differences will at once occur to any one acquainted with the First Book of Discipline, and with the constitution and practice of episcopal churches. (1) The bishop in the latter must be consecrated to his office by three, or at least two, bishops who have derived their office in the like

lineal succession from their predecessors; while the superintendent, according to the practice of the Church of Scotland, and the constitution of the Church of the Foreigners in London, might be set apart to his office by a simple presbyter or ordinary minister of the church. (2) The distinctive duties of the bishop are such as, according to the practice of the churches recognising the necessity of his office, cannot be delegated save to one of his own order, while there was no duty entrusted to the superintendent in the Church of Scotland which might not be devolved on a mere presbyter; and it was the custom of the General Assembly to delegate to ordinary ministers the whole functions of visitation and superintendence in provinces not provided with a permanent superintendent, and to do so at times even in the case where the former popish bishop of the diocese had joined himself to the Reformed Church. (3) It is not generally recognised in episcopal churches as a duty specially incumbent on the bishop to preach regularly in the several churches of his diocese (certainly it was not expected of the English bishops who were contemporary with the Scottish superintendents);¹ but it was one of the main duties expected of these superintendents, and one of the chief

¹ The jest attributed to Queen Elizabeth that she had *made* a bishop but *marred* a good preacher shows this.

reasons assigned for the institution of their office, that the Gospel might be preached from time to time in all those parishes not provided with a more stated ministry, and that thus men in every corner of the land might attain some knowledge of the truths of our holy religion, as well as some feeling of godliness. (4) Finally, the bishop in all episcopal churches, so far as my knowledge extends, is allowed to claim a negative voice in synods of his clergy, and can in no case be taken under discipline and judged by them, but only by a synod of his own order; while the superintendent in the Scottish Church was merely the permanent Moderator of Synod, and was bound to give effect to the decision of the majority, or to carry it by appeal before a higher court; and he was not only liable to be judged and punished for neglect of duty and for personal misconduct by the General Assembly, but was also liable to be charged with such offences before his own synod, and to be judged and punished by it. On these grounds I am so far from admitting that the superintendent was in all respects identical with the bishop, that I am inclined to hold that it was just because he was so completely stripped of all real episcopal power that, when the hierarchy was revived, even the most moderate of the bishops found they could not contain themselves within the limits prescribed to the superintendents in

the First Book of Discipline; and that one of the main obstacles in the way of their success in the struggle with their refractory presbyters was occasioned by their own hasty promise to observe the caveats founded on the previous practice in the case of superintendents, and especially by their promise to be subject to the judgment and censure of the General Assembly.

The form of church government in Scotland was still further connected with that of the Calvinistic churches on the Continent (particularly that of France) by the establishment and gradation of church courts—the General Assembly having jurisdiction over the whole church, the provincial synod over the ministers and congregations within a particular province, and the session or lesser eldership or consistory over one or more neighbouring congregations.¹ What afterwards came to be known as the greater eldership, or presbytery, or classical consistory,² does not appear at first under that distinctive

¹ In the chief towns, just as in Geneva, there seems from early times to have been a common or "general session," although there were several congregations in each, as in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, and Perth.

² Even the Second Book of Discipline does not sharply distinguish between the lesser and greater eldership or presbytery; and Gillespie admits they were not distinguished in the primitive church, though he holds that both were needed in Scotland to do the work which the one presbytery did in the primitive church (*infra*, pp. 230-233).

name; but even the germ of this was implanted in that weekly meeting of ministers and elders for the interpretation of Scripture termed the exercise, which was authorised both by the Book of Common Order and the First Book of Discipline.¹ It was soon established in all the considerable towns in Scotland where there was a fully constituted reformed church, and though at first it may possibly have confined itself to the object it was immediately intended to serve, and may have intervened only by advice in matters of discipline, yet it was not in the nature of things that such a gathering of ministers and elders from neighbouring churches should take place from week to week without such cases as occupied the attention of parochial consistories being discussed and advised on, as well as the doctrinal and critical questions arising out of their exercises, which they were expressly empowered to dispose of. The tendencies of the institution were so manifest, and the powers it speedily assumed so undisguised, that Queen Elizabeth became alarmed, and insisted on the suppression of it throughout the province of

¹[The Book of Common Order distinguishes between the weekly meeting of the ministers and elders in their assembly or consistory, and the weekly meeting of the congregation for the interpretation of the Scriptures (Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 411-413; Laing's Knox, iv. 177-179). For the nature and object of the exercise see *infra*, pp. 170-173.]

Canterbury, notwithstanding the remonstrances and entreaties of the good Archbishop Grindal, and his repeated and urgent petitions that she would rather endeavour to confine it to the original purpose, in which it had been of great service, than suppress it altogether. In the province of York, where the institution had taken firmer root, and where the contentions between Papists and Protestants had gained more prominence than those between Puritans and anti-Puritans, it was tolerated for a considerably longer period. When in 1581 Scotland was regularly divided into presbyteries, the exercises previously existing in particular towns were merged in, and their work devolved on, these; and in the beginning of the seventeenth century, when episcopacy was restored, the name of presbytery was again frequently exchanged for that of exercise.

Of these several church courts perhaps the most distinctive as well as the most important was the General Assembly, which was originally held to represent the whole church; and which may still, after the lapse of ages, be held substantially to do so — having representatives not only from each of the presbyteries but also from each of the universities and royal burghs in the kingdom. It has been wont to meet not (as such national synods have generally done elsewhere) occasion-

ally and chiefly for legislative purposes, that is, authoritatively to explain the church's creed and enact canons to regulate the administration of discipline, but frequently and at short stated intervals to review the proceedings of the inferior judicatories of the church, as well as to legislate regarding matters of doctrine and discipline. Whether its peculiar vitality in the Scottish Church is to be ascribed to its popular constitution, or to the fact that it has in general faithfully represented the national sentiments in those controversies which in successive generations have been agitated in our country; or whether the groundwork of it had not been laid long before in those national councils of the church which the popish ecclesiastics had, under the bull of Pope Honorius III.,¹ deemed themselves warranted to hold every year, and at which the king and his nobles appear often to have been present, and whether, therefore, in the maintenance of this quasi-Gallican liberty, as well as in some minor matters enumerated by Lord Hailes, there may not have been a closer and more real connection between the pre- and post-Reformation church in Scotland than has been commonly admitted, it would now, perhaps, be very difficult to deter-

¹ [The bull, which is printed in *Concilia Scotiæ*, ii. 3, is dated "xiiij kalendas Junij pontificatus nostri anno nono," *i.e.*, the 19th of May 1225.]

mine. But it will be allowed on all hands that this venerable court—which was so early established and has subsisted almost uninterruptedly since the Reformation, and has exercised such extensive legislative and judicial powers—is the most distinctive characteristic of the Scottish Church, and has had great influence in the development of Scottish opinion and religious life.

II. *The Discipline of the Church.*

The opinions of our reformer and his associates regarding the discipline and practical organisation of the church have hardly ever been made a subject of serious controversy, even by those who have so long called in question the generally received ideas regarding his opinions on the government of the church. That which marked out the early Reformed Church of Scotland most distinctively among the churches of the Reformation was the fact that she advocated, and resolutely carried into practical operation, that "godly discipline" which they all admitted had been used in the primitive church in her best and purest days, and the restoration of which, they perhaps ventured to hint, was much to be desired, but which yet they had not the courage to demand from the civil power as of essential concern to the wellbeing of their churches.

Even Luther, who began so well, hesitated and quailed before the claims of the civil powers, and left it to Calvin to carry out his own earlier conceptions, and those of the Hessian Synod of 1528.¹ Our reformers, however, boldly laid down the absolute necessity of it in their Book of Common Order, and named in their Confession as one of the three distinctive marks of a true church of Christ, "ecclesiastical discipline uprightlie ministred as Goddis Worde prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and vertew nurished."² Not content to exercise such a discipline merely under this clause of their State-ratified Confession, they sought and obtained an explicit acknowledgment of the church's privileges in special Acts of Parliament, which continue in force at the present day, and have enabled the Church of Scotland to maintain a stricter and more efficient discipline than any other established church has ventured to aim at.

The nature and ends of this discipline are pretty fully explained in the introductory chapters of the Book of Common Order, in the Book of Discipline, and the Order of Excommunication and Public Repentance. "As no citie, towne, house, or family," it is affirmed in the first of

¹ See Schenkel's article, "Kirche," in Herzog's Real-Encyclopädie.

² Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 68; Laing's Knox, ii. 110.

these treatises, "can maintaine their estate and prosper without policy and governance, even so the Church of God, which requireth more purely to be governed than any citie or family, cannot without spirituall policy and ecclesiastical discipline continue, increase, and flourish;¹ and as the Word of God is the life and soule of this church, so this godly order and discipline is, as it were, sinews in the body, which knit and joine the members together with decent order and comelinesse; it is a bridle to stay the wicked from their mischiefs, it is a spurre to pricke forward such as be slow and negligent; yea, and for all men it is the father's rod, ever in a readiness to chastise gently the faults committed, and to cause them afterward to live in more godly feare and reverence."² Three causes are assigned why such discipline should be retained and practised in the church—viz., that evil men may not be numbered among God's children, that the good may not be infected by association with the ungodly, and that the individual taken under discipline may be made ashamed of his fault, and so

¹ See Calvin's Institutes, book iv. chap. ii.—"As no city or village can exist without a magistrate and government, so the Church of God stands in need of a spiritual polity of its own. This is altogether distinct from the civil government, and is so far from hindering or impairing it, that it rather does much to aid and promote it."

² Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 413; Laing's Knox, iv. 203.

may be induced to repent and amend. This is said to be the object even of excommunication—the highest censure the church can inflict on an offending brother—that he, being brought to a due sense of his sin and misery, may be saved in the day of the Lord. It is expressly provided that, in regard to this last and highest censure, nothing is to be attempted without the determination of the whole church—*i.e.*, of the ordinary members of the church—and they are affectionately reminded that it is their duty to take good heed “that they seeme not more ready to expell from the congregation than to receive againe those, in whom they perceave worthy fruits of repentance to appeare,” and “that all punishments, corrections, censures, and admonitions stretch no farther than God’s Word with mercy may lawfully beare.”¹

The Order of Excommunication and Public Repentance, sanctioned by the General Assembly in 1569, long continued to be used as a directory in the administration of discipline. It was compiled by Knox, or rather abridged by him from Alasco’s ‘*Modus ac Ritus Excommunicationis*’ and his ‘*Forma ac Ratio Publicæ Penitentiaë*,’

¹ Dunlop’s *Confessions*, ii. 414-417; Laing’s *Knox*, iv. 204-206. If this humanity is not observed in private as well as in public, there is danger lest instead of discipline we fall into a kind of Gehenna, and instead of correctors and educators become executioners of the brethren (Calvin).

used with the approbation of Edward VI. in the Church of the Foreigners in London. It breathes throughout a spirit of tender regard for erring brethren and earnest longing for their recovery, quite as strongly as it manifests a spirit of holy zeal for the glory of God and the purity of His church. In all save the most notorious and urgent cases, the offender was to be dealt with repeatedly both in private and in public to confess his aggravated offence before the extreme penalty was inflicted on him. If these dealings and admonitions proved ineffectual, the minister was once more to explain the nature of his offence, and the frequency of the public and private admonitions addressed to him, was then to appeal to the elders and deacons to confirm the truth of what he said, and finally was to ask of the whole church if they thought such a contempt should be suffered amongst them, and only in the event of no man making further intercession for the erring and obstinate was the minister to proceed to pronounce the fearful sentence.¹

In the times of declension which arose after James VI. took the government into his own

¹ The form of absolution then appointed to be used was, with consent of Henderson, modified by the Westminster divines into the shape in which it appears in their Directory for Church Government and Excommunication, and as modified was afterwards inserted in our Form of Process of 1707.

hands, the strict exercise of such discipline became specially odious to the king and his gay courtiers, and incessant efforts were made to relax its rigour. These, however, were in general directed to effect this object rather by means of than in spite of the church, by securing that cases involving the sentence of excommunication should be reserved for the determination of the higher courts of the church, on which the king and his friends could bring their influence to bear with most effect. Even during the domination of the Second Episcopacy it is well known, from records still extant, that kirk-sessions and presbyteries were continued, and were allowed, with the sanction of the bishop, to maintain a discipline which in the present day would not be generally accounted lax. The grotesque penances so often resorted to in the times immediately succeeding the Reformation, and for the use of which our forefathers have been subjected to so much abuse and ridicule, were by no means confined to them, and probably had been suggested by similar grotesque ones in use before, and were employed by the Court of High Commission, by the Church of England, and by other churches too, in so far as they ever ventured to exercise discipline on notorious offenders. Even those melancholy trials of

witches, for which they have been so severely blamed, were not originated by them, and were countenanced quite as much by their opponents, and by no one more than by the pope and his entourage, as well as by James VI., the great patron of the bishops, and for long were clamoured for by the people.

To us, living in the light and glorying in the toleration of the nineteenth century, some of these disciplinary provisions may seem harsh, several of the details frivolous, others inquisitorial; and the very principle of such a close identification of the ecclesiastical and civil, as that all offences against morality and church discipline were to be also dealt with and punished by the state, more than questionable. But to men living in the sixteenth century and just emerging out of the ignorance and licence which the old church had tolerated, and longing to be moulded into a community really holy and self-denying and quickened to a higher life—enthused with a longing to reach loftier heights in it—the iron discipline of Calvin and Knox was welcome as requiring only what they felt to be their duty and their true interest. We may extend to the disciple what the historian of French Protestantism has said of the master, and so far varying the words of Haag affirm; “The institutions of Calvin [and Knox]

accomplished what was proposed. In less than three generations the Genevese [and Lowland Scots] were entirely remoulded. To frivolity and licentiousness succeeded that somewhat austere strictness of morals which in earlier days distinguished the disciples of the reformer[s]. History tells of only two [three] men who have been able permanently to impress their stamp on an entire people—Lycurgus and Calvin [and Knox], whose characters in fact have much in common.”¹ The Athenians made merry over the black broth of the Spartans; but Sparta conquered Athens. How many accusations and witticisms have been launched against the Calvinistic spirit, and yet Calvinistic countries led the way in Christian activity and civil freedom, and to them even those who abuse them are largely indebted for their blessings.

III. *The Prerogatives and Duties of Church Members.*

The thorough agreement of our reformers' ideas respecting the nature of the church with those of the apostles and primitive Christians comes out even more emphatically in the statements they make in the First Book of Discipline and the

¹ La France protestant, deuxième édition, iii. 530.

Book of Common Order about the ordinary members of the congregation, and the arrangements there recommended for promoting their spiritual welfare, and calling forth all their gifts. Not only are they to be allowed a voice in the choice of their ministers, elders, and deacons, in the exclusion of members from the church and their readmission into it, and through their representatives in the government of the church generally; not only are they to have week-day and Sabbath services, and frequent communions for their edification and growth in grace,—but in the principal congregations there are to be weekly meetings for the study and interpretation of the Scriptures. At these meetings every man was to be allowed to speak his mind and propose his doubts, to exercise his gifts for the edification of the brethren, or to “inquire as God shall move his heart and the text minister occasion.”¹ The opening paragraph of chapter xii. of the First Book of Discipline shows us whence this remarkable institution was derived, and proves clearly that Neander was not the first in post-Reformation times who discovered the full significance of certain well-known passages in St Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, but only a restorer of the long-forgotten teaching of Calvin,

¹ Book of Common Order, in Dunlop’s Confessions, ii. 412; Laing’s Knox, iv. 179.

Alasco, and Knox. The paragraph is as follows: "To the end that the kirk of God may have a tryall of men's knowledge, judgements, graces, and utterances; as also, such that have somewhat profited in God's Word may from time to time grow in more full perfection to serve the kirk as necessity shall require; it is most expedient that in every towne where schooles and repaire of learned men are, there be a time in one certain day every week appointed to that exercise which S. Paul calls prophesying; the order whereof is expressed by him in thir words: 'Let the prophets speak two or three and let the other judge, but if anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the former keep silence; for ye may one by one all prophesie that all may learne, and all may receive consolation.' . . . By which words of the apostle, it is evident that in the Kirk of Corinth when they did assemble for that purpose, some place of Scripture was read, upon the which one first gave his judgement to the instruction and consolation of the auditors; after whom did another either confirme what the former had said, or added what he had omitted, or did gently correct or explaine more properly where the whole verity was not revealed to the former; and in case things were hid from the one and from the other, liberty was given for a third to speak his judgement to the edification

of the kirk." The exercise or practice here authorised by the apostle, it is next affirmed, is a thing most necessary for the kirk of God this day in Scotland, "for thereby, as said is, shall the kirk have judgement and knowledge of the graces, gifts, and utterances of *every man within their bodie*, the simple and such as have somewhat profited shall be encouraged daily to studie and to proceed in knowledge, and the whole kirk shall be edified; for this exercise must be patent to such as list to hear and learne, and *every man shall have liberty to utter and declare his minde and knowledge to the comfort and consolation of the Kirk.*"¹ Then after appointing some prudent regulations to prevent this liberty of prophesying from encroaching on the province of the regular ministry of the church, or degenerating into a school for the encouragement of rash speculation instead of ministering to the comfort and godly edifying of the brethren, directions are given that the ministers of the landward parishes adjacent to every important town, together with the readers within six miles, should assist those that prophesy within the towns, that they themselves may learn or others may learn from them. "And moreover," it is again repeated, "men in whom is supposed to be any gifts which might edifie the church if they were well imployed must be charged . . . to

¹ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 587-589; Laing's Knox, ii. 242, 243.

joyn themselves with the session and company of interpreters. . . . For no man *may be permitted as best pleaseth him to live within the kirk of God,* but every man must be constrained by fraternall admonition and correction to bestow his labours, when of the kirk he is required, to the edification of others.”¹ Such was the remarkable provision made by our reformers, that every adult member of the church should enjoy such means of grace as were fitted to promote his growth in Christian knowledge as well as in spiritual life, and should have reasonable opportunity of using for the glory of God and the good of his brethren the gifts with which the Spirit of God had furnished him. It may be questioned whether some such institution is not as much needed in the present day, if the members of the church are to be preserved from the temptations to doubt with which they are surrounded, and if they are to be encouraged to supplement the labours of their ministers and elders in winning back those who have been seduced into the paths of error or sin; and whether its influence, if it were only set about with earnestness, would be less powerful to preserve and reclaim than it was in those earlier times.

Dunlop's Confessions, ii, 590, 591; Laing's Knox, ii, 244, 245.

IV. Education of the Young and University Reform.

The care and anxiety of our reformers were not confined to the adult members of the church. They were extended in a special manner to the young, and were manifested towards them, if possible, with more intense earnestness and loving tenderness. Though parish schools, in the later sense, were not yet devised, detailed arrangements were made that the readers at the several kirks should impart religious knowledge and the elements of primary education to the young of the flock, and that those who showed an aptitude for learning and capability of being trained to be of service to kirk or common-weal should have access at various centres to higher training. "Seeing," they say in their importunate pleading with the nobles on their behalf, "that God hath determined that His kirke here in earth shall be taught not by angels but by men, and seeing that men are borne ignorant of God and of all godlinesse, . . . of necessity it is that your honours be most careful for the vertuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this realm, if either ye now thirst unfainedly [for] the advancement of Christ's glorie or yet desire the continuance of His benefits to the generation following; for as the youth must succeed to us,

so we ought to be carefull that they have knowledge and erudition to profit and comfort that which ought to be most deare to us, to wit, the kirk and spouse of our Lord Jesus.”¹ To secure this noble end it was deemed necessary that, besides the readers’ schools, every considerable town should have at least one schoolmaster appointed who was competent to teach grammar and the Latin tongue; and that in the more notable towns, especially the old cathedral cities, where the revenues of the prebendaries or of the monks might be made available, there should be a college in which at least logic, rhetoric, and the languages—*i.e.*, Latin and Greek—should be taught by competent masters, for whom and for the poorer scholars attending them suitable stipends and bursaries should be provided out of the aforesaid revenues. The fruit of such an organisation, it is affirmed, would soon appear. “For first, the youthhead and tender children shall be nourished and brought up in vertue *in presence of their friends*, by whose good attendance many inconveniences may be avoyded in which the youth commonly fall either by overmuch libertie which they have in strange and unknowne places while they cannot rule themselves, or else for lack of good attendance and of such necessaries as their tender age requires.

¹ Dunlop’s Confessions, ii. 547; Laing’s Knox, ii. 209.

Secondly, the exercise of children in every kirke shall be great instruction to the aged and unlearned," who had never been taught to read, and in whose presence in the Sunday afternoon service they were examined. Lastly, "the great Schooles called the Universities shall be replenished with these that shall be apt to learning; for this must be carefully provided that no father, of what estate or condition that ever he be, use his children at his own fantasie especially in their youthhead; but *all must be compelled* to bring up their children in learning and vertue." Thus boldly did our reformers lay down the principle of compulsory education, which men in our own day have only hesitatingly adopted, but with greater consistency or daring than our contemporaries have yet evinced, for they proposed to apply the principle to the children of the rich and potent, as well as to those of the poor and vicious. Those higher classes, they say, "may not be permitted to suffer their children to spend their youth in vaine idleness as heretofore they have done, but they must be exhorted, and by the censure of the kirk compelled, to dedicate their sonnes by training them up in good exercises to the profite of the kirk and commonwealth." This they expect the rich to do at their own expense, while they desire the children of the poor to be

supported at the charge of the kirk. The sons neither of rich nor poor are to be permitted to reject learning if they develop any aptitude for it, but are to be "charged to continue their studie that the commonwealth may have some comfort by them." To secure this object, discreet and learned men are to visit the schools every quarter, and examine what proficiency the pupils have attained.¹

To these suggestions regarding primary and secondary schools succeeds a very detailed statement of the changes desired in the universities to adapt them to the new order of things. And then they conclude as follows: "All other things touching the books to be read in ilk classe, and all such like particular affaires, we referre to the discretion of the masters, principals, and regents, with their well-advised counsel; not doubting bnt if God shall grant quietnesse, and give your wisdomes grace to set forward letters in the sort prescribed, ye shall leave wisdom and learning to your posterity—a treasure more to be esteemed than any earthly treasure ye are able to amasse for them, which without wisdom are more able to be their ruin and confusion than their help and comfort. And as this is most true, so we leave it with the rest of the commodities to be weighed by your honours' wisdom, and set forwards by

¹ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 548-550; Laing's Knox, ii. 209-211.

your authority to the most high advancement of this commonwealth committed to your charge." ¹

These touching appeals were not made altogether in vain. Though neither quietness nor a large measure of grace was granted to the rough barons so earnestly and tenderly addressed, yet the goodly fabric of our church and commonwealth was reared up in those troublous times. The full and liberal adoption of the plan of national education sketched by our reformer and his associates still remains in part to be desiderated, and is worthy to be striven for by the churches which claim to represent them. The partial carrying out of their views, more than any other influence that can be named, has conduced to elevate our people and raise Scotland to the rank it now holds among the nations; and we can hardly doubt that the more complete realisation of them in the careful Christian training of the young and the adult members of the church, and the extension of the blessings of education and religion to the masses so long left to grow up in ignorance and vice, would tend greatly to bring back the disaffected to the paths of peace and life, to raise the members of the church in the scale of intelligence and virtue, to make the nobles more than ever heretofore the *decus et tutamen patriæ*, and to bind all, both classes and

¹ Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 561; Laing's Knox, ii. 220, 221.

masses, closely together in the bonds of mutual Christian affection and true patriotism.

V. Care of the Poor.

I must still add that the same enlightened principles which guided them to make careful provision for these important objects, led them also to take a kindly interest in the humbler poor and aged, and to urge both on the state and on the members of the church the duty they owed to this long despised and neglected class of the population. First, for the poor peasantry who were not paupers, but who, they allege, had been grievously oppressed by the exactions of the clergy in the times immediately preceding, they present the following earnest plea: "With the griefe of our hearts we heare that some gentlemen are now as cruell over their tenants as ever were the Papists, requiring of them (the tiends and) whatsoever they afore payed to the kirk, so that the Papistical tyrannie shall onely be changed into the tyrannie of the lord and laird. We dare not flatter your honours, neither yet is it profitable for you that we so doe: (for neither shall we,) if we permit cruelty to be used; neither shall ye, who by your authoritie ought to gaine-stand such oppression, nor yet they that use the same, escape God's heavie and fearfull judge-

ments. The gentlemen, barones, earles, lords, and others must be content to live upon their just rents, and suffer the kirk to be restored to her (*right and*) liberty; that by her restitution, the poore, who heretofore, by the cruell Papisists, have been spoiled and oppressed, may now receive some comfort and relaxation, and their tiends and other exactions *be cleane discharged* and no more taken in time comming. The uppermost claith, corps-present, clerk-maile, the pasche-offering, tiend-ale, and all handlings¹ upaland can neither be required nor recieved of good conscience."²

The history of the world, the history of the Christian church, has few passages more noble than this, where these poor ministers, not yet assured of decent provision for their own maintenance, boldly undertake the patronage of the peasantry, and say they would rather suffer themselves than ask that teinds should be exacted from those who had been so long ground down, not only by the exaction of these from their crofts and even from their gardens, but also by a multi-

¹ [Dr Mitchell seems to have thought that *handlings* should be read *haldings*.]

² Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 562, 563. [The words which in this quotation are enclosed in parentheses are not in the copy of the Book of Discipline preserved by Knox (Laing's Knox, ii. 221, 222). Instead of the words, "if *we* permit cruelty to be used," that copy reads, "if *you* permit suche crueltie to be used"; and after the words, "comfort and relaxation," is the clause, "Concludit be the Lordis.,"]

tude of other imposts, which, although their very names are now almost forgotten in Scotland, had been long felt to be a grievous oppression. Was it any wonder that those crushed and down-trodden classes should rally round their protectors, and under their kindly and godly training should grow up to be a strength to the church and a power in the state? Charming fancy pictures are still sometimes drawn of the stately monastery—with its handsome church and kindly and cultured monks—as a centre of civilising and Christianising influences to the district in which it was erected. These influences no doubt had a certain reality in the early ages of the church, and even in the days of the good Queen Margaret; but in Scotland, at least, these days had long passed away before the sixteenth century; and the monasteries, as a whole, had become a source of weakness and scandal, rather than of strength and honour to the dominant church. In fact, their wealth, being to a large extent derived from the teinds of parishes, should have been devoted to the spiritual interests of these parishes, whereas the vicars appointed by them being generally put off with a miserable pittance and left largely dependent on these hated and oppressive exactions—corpse presents, uppermost cloth, Pasche-offerings—could not fail to alienate the peasantry from the monasteries and their

rural representatives. Such charges of oppression could never have been so publicly made against them had they not been notoriously true. And if further evidence were needed, it may be found in abundance in the poems of Sir David Lindsay and the Wedderburns. The picture the former has drawn of the poor peasant driven out of house and holding¹ by these oppressive exac-

¹ The pauper comes on the stage with the words—

“Of your almis, gude folks, for God’s luife of heavin,
For I have motherles bairns either sax or seavin ;”

and proceeds in piteous strain—

“Gude man, will ye gif me of your charitie,
And I sall declair yow the black veritie.
My father was ane auld man, and a hoir,
And was of age four scoir of yeirs and moir.
And Maird, my mother, was four scoir and fyfteine,
And with my labour I did thame baith susteine.
Wee had ane meir, that caryit salt and coill,
And everie ilk yeir scho brocht us hame ane foill.
Wee had thrie ky, that was baith fat and fair,
Nane tydier into the toun of Air.
My father was sa waik of blude, and bane,
That he deit, quhairfoir my mother maid gret maine :
Then scho deit, within ane day or two ;
And thair began my povertie and wo.
Our gude gray meir was baittand on the feild,
And our Land’s laird tuik hir for his hyreild,
The vickar tuik the best cow be the heid,
Incontinent, quhen my father was deid.
And quhen the vickar hard tel how that my mother
Was deid, fra hand he tuke to him ane uther :
Then Meg, my wife, did murne baith evin and morow,
Till at the last scho deit for verie sorow :
And quhen the vickar hard tell my wyfe was dead,
The thrid cow he cleikit be the heid.
Thair umest clayis, that was of rapploch gray,
The vickar gart his clark bear them away.
Quhen all was gane, I nicht mak na debeat,
Bot with my bairns past for till beg my meat.
Now, haif I tald yow the blak veritie,
How I am brocht into this miserie.”

—Laing’s Lindsay’s Poetical Works, 1879, ii. 99, 102, 103.

tions is known to be true to the life; and contributed greatly to the overthrow of the merciless oppressors who, until the very eve of the triumph of the Reformation, could not be persuaded either to abolish or abate their dues.¹

¹ [In the Articles addressed by some of the temporal lords and barons to the queen regent, and sent by her to the Provincial Council convened in Edinburgh a few weeks before the Reformation burst like a tempest upon the country, it was requested that "the corps presentes, kow, and [um]jest claith, and the silvir commonlie callit the kirk richts, and Pasch offrandis quhilk is takin at Pasch fra men and women for distribution of the sacrament of the blessit body and blood of Jesus Christ," should no longer be extorted under pain of excommunication or debarring from the sacraments, but left to the free will of the givers (Concilia Scotiae, ii. 148, 149). The Council met this demand for reformation by enacting that in future the poor should be freed from mortuary dues, while those not quite so poor were only to pay them in a modified form; and the small tithes and oblations were to be taken up before Lent so as to avoid the appearance of selling the sacrament (Ibid., ii. 167, 168, 174). When, on the 27th of May 1560, the reforming vicar of Lintrathin raised a summons against his parishioners for payment of his teinds, "the cors present and umest clayth of all yeris and termes bigane restand unpayit" were specially excepted from his claim (Spalding Miscellany, iv. 121).]