

## CHAPTER X.

## THE SECOND BOOK OF DISCIPLINE.

IN a previous lecture I have endeavoured to give a pretty full account of the First Book of Discipline. It remains yet to say a few words about the Second Book of Discipline.

Principal John Cunningham has said: "The First Book exhibited a system of polity sagaciously suited to the circumstances of the country and the church: it seemed to grow out of the times."<sup>1</sup> I will add that it was not only suited to the times, but to many of the practical needs of the church of all times. I therefore hold that even yet it is worthy of a higher place than to be deemed merely a "collection of parchments and coins deposited beneath it [*i.e.*, the Second Book] by which future generations may read the story of the times in which the building was begun."<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Cunningham's Church History of Scotland, 1859, i. 444.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 445.

Second Book is more a book of constitutional law; and aims, as the Principal says, at elaborating a system from the New Testament without reference to circumstances, and bears far more resemblance to the Ordonnances of Calvin than to the less ambitious and more comprehensive Church Order Books of Germany. But the Second Book of Discipline has even fewer practical details than the ordinances of Geneva. Of course, so far as it actually abolished or modified the regulations of the First Book, these fell to be disused; but in so far as it did not actually do so, they still had a certain validity: and even in the Covenanting times it is generally the Books, not the Book of Discipline, to which reference is made in Acts of Assembly.

No one in our times, perhaps, has shown a more thorough appreciation of the real merits of the First Book than the Duke of Argyll in his well-known essay on "Presbytery." Mr Hill Burton, who depreciates it in comparison with the Second, makes far more than is warranted of the strong language in which it occasionally indulges against the old church, with which he contrasts the more restrained and balanced utterances of the Second Book.<sup>1</sup> I do not yield to many in my admiration of the

<sup>1</sup> Hill Burton's History of Scotland, 1876, v. 203.

courage and calmness of Melville; but I could no more think of placing him, scholarly and bold, yet calm, as he generally was, nor the Book attributed to him, more logical and unimpassionately didactic though it be, before the eager, impetuous, yet sagacious Knox, with his wealth of rude eloquence and thrilling tenderness, and his Book in which these qualities of head and heart are so clearly mirrored, than I would think of placing Calvin, highly as I honour him, before Luther, or his Catechism before the Wittenberg hymn-books.

I do not believe that the principles of the two Books are so widely different as they have sometimes been represented to be, or that the grand ideas of Knox concerning the place of the laity in the church, the education of the young, and the support and kindly treatment of the aged poor, were meant to be rejected or ignored by his great successor; but I do think these matters fall considerably into the background. Some of the noblest conceptions of the earlier Book are narrowed, and the whole system stiffened; and in the contests in which the church had then to engage with the young monarch, in vindication of her independence in her own province, positions were laid down which were soon pressed to consequences from which Knox and his associates would have shrunk.

They, who had been obliged long to contend with a corrupt and obstinate clergy which would grant no real reform in doctrine, no substantial concessions for the alleviation of practical grievances, boldly laid down the principle that "to kings, princes, rulers, and magistrates . . . chieflie and most principallie the conservation and purgation of the religioun apperteinis; so that not onlie they are appointed for civill policie, but also for maintenance of the trew religioun, and for suppressing of idolatrie and superstitioun whatsoever. . . . And therefore wee confesse and avow that sik as resist the supreme power doing that thing quhilk appertains to his charge, do resist Goddis ordinance, and therefore cannot be guiltles."<sup>1</sup> Melville, who was called to contend with a king bent on securing autocratic power in the church as well as in the state, laid down, with the utmost precision, the principle in chapter x., "Although kings and princes that be godlie, sumtymes be their awin authority whan the kirk is corruptit and all things out of ordor, place ministers and restore the trew service of the Lord efter the examples of sum godly kings of Juda and divers godly emperours and kings also in the light of the

<sup>1</sup> Confession of 1560, in Dunlop's *Confessions*, ii. 92, 93. [In Laing's *Knox*, ii. 118, it is *reformatioun and purgatioun* instead of *conservation and purgation*.]

New Testament; yit quhair the ministrie of the kirk is anes lawfullie constitute and they that are placeit do thair office faithfullie, all godlie princes and magistratis aucht to heir and obey thair voice, and reverence the majestie of the Son of God speiking be them";<sup>1</sup> or, as in chapter i., where it is laid down, "As ministeris are subject to the judgement and punishment of the magistrat in externall things if they offend, so aucht the magistratis to submit themselvis to the discipline of the kirk gif they transgresse in matteris of conscience and religioun."<sup>2</sup>

Hill Burton sarcastically remarks that "if we grant that those who prepared it were what they called themselves—the Church of God, presided

<sup>1</sup> Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 788, 789. [The Second Book of Discipline has been frequently printed. It is in Calderwood's History, Wodrow Society ed., iii. 529-555; Spottiswoode's History, 1655, pp. 289-302; Spottiswoode Society ed., ii. 233-256; Booke of the Universall Kirk, Bannatyne Club ed., ii. 488-512; Peterkin's ed., pp. 537-563; Dunlop's Confessions, ii. 757-805. The quotations in the text are from Dunlop.]

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., ii. 764. Melville afterwards more pithily expressed the same principle in his sovereign's presence: "Thair is twa kings and twa kingdomes in Scotland. Thair is Chryst Jesus the King, and His kingdome the kirk, whase subject King James the Saxt is, and of whase kingdome nocht a king, nor a lord, nor a heid, bot a member! And they whome Chryst hes callit and commandit to watch over His kirk, and governe His spirituall kingdome, hes sufficient powar of Him and authoritie sa to do, bathe togidder and severalie; the quhilk na Christian king nor prince sould controll and discharge, but fortife and assist, utherwayes nocht fathfull subjects nor members of Chryst" (Melville's Diary, p. 370).

over by the Lord Jesus Christ as the representative of the Godhead on earth—it would be difficult to refuse assent to what follows. Nothing can be more perfect than the analysis by which the two ruling powers are separated from each other, and the ecclesiastical set above the secular.”<sup>1</sup> If this is not quite borne out, one can hardly help feeling that more care should have been taken to mark out the limits of ecclesiastical authority, and to show that the power of ministers and elders was as distinctly limited by the laws of Christ as that of kings and magistrates ought to be by the laws of the land; or, in other words, that ministers and elders may err in interpreting the laws of Christ, just as civil rulers may err in interpreting the laws of the land. No doubt the limitation contended for is in words admitted, “the magistrat neither aucht to preich, minister the sacraments, nor execute the censuris of the kirk, nor yit prescribe any rewll how it sould be done; bot command the ministeris to observe the rewll commandit in the Word, and punish the transgressours be civill means. The ministeris exerce not the civill jurisdiction, bot teich the magistrat how it sould be exercit according to the Word.”<sup>2</sup> “It is proper to kings, princes, and magistrates to be callit lordis

<sup>1</sup> Hill Burton's *History of Scotland*, v. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Dunlop's *Confessions*, ii. 763.

and dominators over their subjectis, whom they govern civilly; bot it is proper to Christ onlie to be callit Lord and Master in the spirituall government of the kirk, and all utheris that beiris office therein aucht not to usurp dominion therein, nor be callit lordis, bot onlie ministeris, disciples, and servantis. For it is Christis proper office to command and rewill His kirk universall, and every particular kirk, throw His Spirit and Word, be the ministrie of men.”<sup>1</sup> But it is not made sufficiently prominent anywhere in the Book that these men are only entitled to unreserved obedience when they truly speak Christ’s mind and truly follow His Word. Those who have made most of the Book have neither clearly perceived this nor have they realised the full meaning of the lucid and explicit statement made by Rutherford when he was contending against the Erastians and Independents of England. Had they done so, I cannot but think that the bitter divisions among Scottish Presbyterians would have been fewer, and that there would have been far less occasion for the reproach often cast on them, that new presbyter is but old priest writ large.

“That the magistrate is not obliged,” Rutherford affirms, “to execute the decrees of the church without further examination, whether they be

<sup>1</sup> Dunlop’s Confessions, ii. 762.

right or wrong, as Papists teach that the magistrate is to execute the decrees of their Popish councils with blind obedience, and submit his faith to them, because he is a layman and may not dare to examine whether the church doth erre or not, is clear. 1. Because, if in hearing the Word all should follow the example of the men of Berea, not relying on the testimony of Paul or any preacher, [and] try whether that which concerneth their conscience and faith be agreeable to the Scriptures or no, and accordingly receive or reject; so in all things of discipline the magistrate is to try by the Word whether he ought to adde his sanction to these decrees which the church gives out for edification, and whether he should draw the sword against such a one as a heretick and a perverter of souls. But the former is true; the magistrate's practise in adding his civill sanction and in punishing hereticks concerneth his conscience, knowing that he must do it in faith as he doth all his moral actions; *ergo*, the magistrate must examine what he practiseth in his office according to the Word, and must not take it upon the meer authority of the church, else his faith in these moral acts of his office should be resolved *ultimate* on the authority of the church, not on the Word of God, which, no doubt, is Popery, for so the warrant of the magistrate's conscience should not be 'thus

saith the Lord,' but 'thus saith the church in their decrees.' 2. The magistrate and all men have a command to try all things, *ergo*, to try the decrees of the church, and to retain what is good (1 Thes. v. 21); to try the spirits even of the church in their decrees (1 John iii. 1). 3. We behooved [in that case] to lay down this Popish ground that . . . the church cannot erre in their decrees. . . . Its against Scripture and reason that magistrates, and by the like reason all others, should obey the decrees of the church with a blinde faith, without inquiring in the warrants and grounds of their decrees, which is as good Popery as, Magistrates and all men are to beleeve as the church beleeveth, with an implicate faith, so ignorance shall be the mother of devotion. Whoever impute this to us—who have suffered for nonconformity, and upon this ground, that synods can erre, refused the ceremonies—are to consult with their own conscience whether this be not to make us appear disloyall and odious to magistracy in that which we never thought, far lesse [presumed] to teache and professe it to the world."<sup>1</sup>

Even more notable are the utterances of George Gillespie, when vindicating against the Erastians of the south that more free government of the church by its own courts from which they feared

<sup>1</sup> Rutherford's *Divine Right of Church Government*, 1646, pp. 596, 597. [1 John iii. 1 is a misprint in the original for 1 John iv. 1.]

so many evils. "I dare confidently say," he affirms, "that, if comparisons be rightly made, presbyterial government is the most limited and the least arbitrary government of any other in the world."<sup>1</sup> And, after entering into details to make good this affirmation in regard to the papal and prelatical forms of government, he proceeds to maintain that Independents "must needs be supposed to exercise a much more unlimited or arbitrary power than the presbyterial churches do," because they exempt individual congregations from all control and correction by superior courts, and because it is "one of their three grand principles which disclaimeth the binding of themselves for the future unto their present judgement and practice, and avoucheth the keeping of this reserve to alter and retract."<sup>2</sup> Some who think that, after all recent changes, they more truly hold the opinions of Gillespie than we do, have laid it down very dogmatically that even although the constitution of a national church were in all other respects scriptural, yet if it did not reserve this power to alter and retract without let or hindrance, it would still be at variance with the tenets of the Covenanting times; but you see here that Gillespie affirms that that was a principle of the Independents, not

<sup>1</sup> Aaron's Rod Blossoming, 1646, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>.Ibid., pp. 180, 181.

of the Presbyterians, and claims<sup>1</sup> it as a special merit of the latter that they were willing to explain their doctrine and discipline to the civil authorities, and, getting these sanctioned, to abide by them till they were again altered by consent of church and state. He denies that in claiming a distinct government for the church the Presbyterians meant to deprive the Christian magistrate of that power and authority in matters of religion which the Word of God and the earlier Confessions of the Reformed churches recognised as belonging to his office. On the contrary, he maintains that not only in extraordinary cases when church government doth degenerate into tyranny, or those who manage it make defection from the truth, "the Christian magistrate may and ought to do diverse things in and for religion, and interpose his authority diverse wayes so as doth not properly belong to his cognisance, decision and administration ordinarily, and in a reformed and well constituted church";<sup>2</sup> but

<sup>1</sup> [Dr Mitchell may have found such a claim elsewhere in Gillespie's works; but it is not distinctly made in that chapter of 'Aaron's Rod Blossoming' from which the quotations in this paragraph are taken, although perhaps it may be held to be implied in the words: "By which it appeareth that their [*i.e.*, the Independents'] way will not suffer them to be so far moulded into an uniformity, or bounded within certain particular rules (I say not with others, but even among themselves) as the Presbyterian way will admit of" (Aaron's Rod Blossoming, p. 181).]

<sup>2</sup> Aaron's Rod Blossoming, p. 182.

also that, in ordinary cases, he is free to act as his own conscience directs in giving or refusing his sanction to the government and discipline of the church; and that if he is offended with any sentence of its courts, "they ought to be ready, in all humility and respect, to give him an account and reason of such their proceedings, and by all means to endeavour the satisfaction of the magistrate his conscience, or otherwise to be warned and rectified if themselves have erred."<sup>1</sup>

Had the principles thus laid down been more clearly kept in view by the framers of the Second Book of Discipline, its influence for good on Scottish Christianity would have been more unmixed than it has been. Had they been more consistently acted on by Rutherford and his associates, who consented to their formal insertion in our later standards, many sad troubles which then and afterwards befel the church, for which they lived and laboured, would have been altogether avoided, or more easily provided against; but as it is, great misunderstandings have certainly arisen. The two Books of Discipline have been too much read apart, instead of being regarded as complementary each of the other; and while all that is liberal and progressive tends, I think, more and more to rally round the one, I believe that much that is nar-

<sup>1</sup> Aaron's Rod Blossoming, p. 183.

rower, but still earnest and resolutely Christian, will continue to draw its inspiration from the other.

The Second Book of Discipline, as well as the First, failed to commend itself to the ruling powers, and to obtain a place in its full form on the statute book. Those of its clauses relating to the functions of the several church courts were inserted almost word for word in the Act of the Scottish Parliament of 1592, reckoned the charter of the presbyterian church. It was, however, several times ratified by the General Assembly, and was partially carried out by its authority from the time of its ratification; and to this extent it, as well as the First Book of Discipline, appears to have been fully recognised. The question of its authority was very fully argued in the famous Auchterarder case. The counsel for the presbytery and the minority of the judges did not venture to argue, however, that as a whole the Second Book of Discipline had received the sanction of the state save in irregular times; but they contended that the notes, contained in Spottiswoode's History, of the clauses respecting which the king and the commissioners of Parliament had come to agreement with the ministers, should be accepted as determining the extent to which it was law. It was affirmed, however, by the majority of the judges that only the clauses

actually inserted in the Act of Parliament could be so regarded, and it has since been maintained by Mr Peterkin that the alleged notes of agreement between the king and the church's commissioners are not actually found in the manuscript copy of the History which is preserved in the Advocate's Library.<sup>1</sup> The general theory of the church, however, which may be said to underlie the most important statement of the Second Book of Discipline, is not materially different from that which finds expression in the First. "The kirk of God," it is said, "is sumtymes largelie takin for all them that professe the Evangill of Jesus Christ, and so it is a company and fellowship, not onely of the godly, but also of hypocrites professing always outwardlyane true religion. Uther tymes it is takin for the godlie and elect onlie, and sumtymes for them that exercise spiritual function

<sup>1</sup> Peterkin's Booke of the Universall Kirk, 1839, p. 549 n. [The late Bishop Russell, after examining the four MS. copies of Spottiswoode's History, came to the conclusion that the one in the Advocates' Library is only the first and incompleated draft of the work, and that the one in Trinity College, Dublin, is the one which Spottiswoode himself prepared for the press. Bishop Russell accordingly followed the Dublin MS. in his edition of the History printed for the Spottiswoode Society, and that edition (as well as the old folio edition) contains the notes of agreement and disagreement. Peterkin has printed the Second Book of Discipline, from an attested copy publicly read on the 29th of September 1591 "in the elderschip of Haddingtoun," and "subscryvit be the brethren thairof." Of the ten subscribers, nine write *minister* after their names; the other simply signs, "Mr L. Hay, Bass."]

amongis the congregation of them that professe the truth.”<sup>1</sup> These last, ministers, doctors, elders, and deacons, are taken to represent the church in its wider sense, and must have a lawful calling from it. This lawful calling is said to consist of two parts—viz., election and ordination. Election is defined to be the choosing out of a person or persons most able for the office that is vacant, by the judgment of the eldership and consent of the congregation to which the person or persons are appointed. Ordination is defined as the separation and sanctifying of the person appointed of God and His kirk after he be well tried and found qualified. The ceremonies of ordination are declared to be fasting, earnest prayer, and imposition of the hands of the eldership. Then follow two of the most important paragraphs in the Book, which come nearest to supplying that which I deem defective in it, a clear and distinct admission that human rulers in the church as well as in the state have but limited powers. “All thir [*i.e.*, those various kinds of office-bearers], as they must be raisit up be God and be Him made able for the wark quhairto they ar callit, so aught they [to] knaw their message to be limitit within God’s Word, without the quhilk bounds they aught not to passe. All thir sould tak these titils and names

<sup>1</sup> Dunlop’s Confessions, ii. 759, 760.

onlie . . . quhilk the Scriptures gevis unto them, as these quhilks import labour, travell and wark; and ar names of offices and service, and not of idlenes, dignitie, warldlie honour or preheminance, qnhilk be Christ our Maister is expresslie reprovit and forbidden. . . . And generallie thir twa things aught they all to respect, the glorie of God, and edifeing of His kirk, in discharging their dewties in their callings."<sup>1</sup>

It is generally supposed that it is in this Second Book of Discipline that we have the first clear institution of that church court which we now call the presbytery, and it admits of no dispute that it was in the year 1581, after the final adoption of the Book by the Assembly, that an attempt was made, with consent of the crown, regularly to divide the country into presbyteries. These, however, though marked out on paper in that year, were in point of fact only gradually set up, and in general they arose out of, and absorbed into themselves, the previously existing *exercise*, which the First Book of Discipline had sanctioned and recommended to meet weekly for the study and interpretation of the Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> The introduction of what are called, but erroneously, lay elders<sup>3</sup> to the place they have so long worthily

<sup>1</sup> Dunlop's Confessions, ii, 769.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 170-173.

<sup>3</sup> ["Some reproachfully and others ignorantly call them *lay elders*. But the distinction of the clergie and laity is popish and

filled in the presbyteries was a still more gradual process. The presbytery of St Andrews, even down to the close of the sixteenth century, appears to have contained no elders save the *doctors*, under which name were comprehended the masters of the university, both professors of divinity and professors of philosophy, and even the doctor or master of the grammar-school. The question, however, has been raised whether it is really the presbytery or the kirk-session which is meant by the word *eldership*, which is generally applied in the Second Book of Discipline to that court to which it asserts that it belongs to see that the Word of God is purely preached within its bounds, the sacraments rightly administered, the discipline maintained, and the ecclesiastical goods rightly distributed; to take care that the ordinances made by provincial, national, and general assemblies are duly executed; and also to make constitutions which concern τὸ πρέπιον in the kirk,<sup>1</sup>—all which duties by the Act of Parliament are expressly

anti-christian; and they who have narrowly considered the records of ancient times have noted this distinction as one of the grounds whence the mystery of iniquity had the beginning of it. The name of *clergie* appropriate to ministers is full of pride and vaine-glory, and hath made the holy people of God to be despised, as if they were prophane and uncleane in comparison of their ministers” (Gillespie’s Assertion of the Government, 1641, p. 3).]

<sup>1</sup> Dunlop’s Confessions, ii. 779, 780.

assigned to the presbytery.<sup>1</sup> This question has been keenly debated down to our own day. The weight of authority is certainly very decidedly in favour of the opinion which identifies this eldership with the presbytery. Among recent authorities we have Dr David Laing and Dr Cook of Haddington on this side, in opposition to the late Principal Cunningham of St Andrews; and among those of a somewhat earlier time we have Principal Lee, Dr M'Crie, and the late Dr George Cook of St Andrews pronouncing in favour of the same view. If we go to older authorities again, we have Spottiswoode, the episcopal historian, and Calderwood, the presbyterian, at one in supporting it. I know of no considerable authority in the seventeenth century which has been adduced on the other side, save that of Henderson, whose statement, however, is rather inferential than direct. In fact, the eldership is used in the Second Book of Discipline itself as a convertible term with presbytery, and is often so used in the acts of contemporary assemblies. When presbyteries came to be set up, they are sometimes designated by the name of eldership, and sometimes by that of presbytery; and where our present authorised version of Scripture reads "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," the Genevan version reads, "with the

<sup>1</sup> Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland, iii. 542.

laying on of the hands of the companie of the eldership.”<sup>1</sup>

The only other alternative is that suggested by the late Procurator Cook, that in the Second Book of Discipline the functions of the two courts were as yet undistributed; and that when they came to be legally distributed by the Act of Parliament of 1592, those which the framers of the Second Book assigned to the eldership were in nearly its very words appropriated to the presbytery, and a much more limited province assigned to the kirk-session—the court called by the Puritans of the south by the name of the Lesser Presbytery. Perhaps it may be regarded as a rather curious confirmation of this theory of Procurator Cook’s, that what he supposes to have been first intended by the framers of the Book as a common court is asserted by Gillespie, the ablest of their successors in the following century, to have been really characteristic of the presbytery of the primitive church. Whatever may be thought of his argument in vindication of what he calls the two presbyteries, the fact remains that he explicitly admits there was but one in the primitive church;<sup>2</sup> and this will be all the more

<sup>1</sup> [In some editions of the Genevan version the word “eldership” is thus explained in the margin: “Under this name he containeth the whole ministerie of the church which was at Ephesus.”]

<sup>2</sup> Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland, 1641, pp. 128-130, 136-147.

remarkable if, with Mr Cook, we hold that what the framers of the Second Book of Discipline really designed was one presbytery or eldership governing a larger or smaller number of churches in common; and that we owe the distribution of the power between the two courts rather to the Act of Parliament than to the Second Book of Discipline. I agree with Gillespie, however, that in the circumstances of the church in a thoroughly Christianised country it would have been a matter to be regretted if every congregation had not had its session or lesser presbytery, with such definitely limited powers as by the Act of Parliament, and by the later acts of the church, are entrusted to it; and I am not sure that we do not owe this arrangement to the episcopal rather than to the presbyterian party, and that it was a concession made by them as the only presbytery they could well acknowledge, if they were to leave any function for the bishop at all in this court. At least the rough draft of the clause of the subsequent Act of Parliament in regard to the kirk-session appears first in the conference held between the two parties, and is then noted as having had the express approval of the king and commissioners of Parliament,<sup>1</sup> which

<sup>1</sup> [It is not quite clear which conference Dr Mitchell is here referring to. In the conference held at Stirling in December 1578, the Second Book of Discipline was discussed section by section. The results are preserved not only by Spottiswoode, as mentioned

was not at that time, nor till considerably later, secured to the clauses in the Act affirming the powers of the larger presbytery.

I have said elsewhere that in chapters xxv. and xxvi. of the Westminster Confession of Faith we have a doctrine affirmed as to the church and the communion of saints which seems to me to be more thoroughly catholic than that which is set forth in the Articles of the Irish Episcopal Church, of the teaching of which the compilers of our Confession have so largely availed themselves. In addition to one invisible church to which all the true elect of God are affirmed to belong, and particular visible churches composed of *professing* Christians in particular nations (both of which are expressly owned in both formularies), the Westminster Confession recognises one visible church to which all throughout the world who profess

above (p. 227 n.), but also by Calderwood (iii. 433-442), neither of whom, however, says that these results were then noted as having been expressly approved by the king. The heads agreed upon at the Holyrood conference on 17th February 1585-86 do not include anything which can be regarded as the draft of the clause of the Act of 1592 concerning the power and jurisdiction of "particulare kirkis" (Calderwood's History, iv. 491-494). The articles defining the jurisdiction of provincial assemblies, presbyteries, and particular kirks, agreed on by the king in conference with some of the brethren sent to him by the General Assembly in May 1586, are transferred almost *verbatim* to the Act of Parliament of 1592 (Booke of the Universall Kirk, Bannatyne Club edit., ii. 665, 666; Calderwood's History, iv. 567, 568; Acts of Parliament, iii. 541, 542).]

faith in Christ are to feel that they belong, and with the members of which they are bound, as God gives them opportunity, to cultivate union and communion. "The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, and of their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world; and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less, visible; and particular churches which are members thereof are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. . . . All

saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by His Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. And, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good." In other words, every true member of the church, be he hearer or office-bearer, holds his place in the body for the good of all, and is bound to use his gifts and opportunities to promote, as far as he can, the spiritual and temporal good of all. A single sentence from the Westminster Directory for Church Government is all I need to give, in supplement of this statement of the Confession, to put you in full possession of their authors' views and aspirations. "When their number [*i.e.*, the membership of a congregation] is so great that they cannot conveniently meet in one place, it is expedient that they be divided according to the respective bounds of their dwellings into distinct and fixed congregations for the better administration of such ordinances as belong unto them, and the discharge of mutual duties; wherein all, according to their several places and callings, are to labour to promote whatever appertains to the power of godliness and credit of religion, that the whole

land, in the full extent of it, may become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."

The sum of all this may be given in the words of Henderson, in the conclusion of his treatise on 'The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland,' the only other treatise which has any right to be set alongside of the Books of Discipline. "In the authoritie of these assemblies, parochial, presbyteriall, provinciall, and nationall, and in the subordination of the lesser unto the greater, or of more particular elderships to the larger and generall eldership, doth consist the externall order, strength, and steadfastnesse of the Church of Scotland. . . . Here there is a superiority without tyrannie, for no minister hath a papall or monarchicall jurisdiction over his own flock, far lesse over other pastors and over all the congregations of a large dioces. Here there is paritie without confusion and disorder, for the pastors are in order before the elders, and the elders before the deacons; the church [*i.e.*, each congregation] is subordinate to the presbyterie, the presbyterie to the synod, and the synod to the nationall assembly. One pastor also hath priority [of esteem] before another, for age, for zeale, for gifts, for his good deservings of the church, each one honouring him whom God hath honoured, and as he beareth the image of

God which was to be seen among the apostles themselves. But none hath power or jurisdiction above others: even as in nature one eye hath not power over another, only the head hath power over all, even as Christ over His church. . . . And lastly, here there is a subjection without slaverie, for the people are subject to the pastors and assemblies, yet there is no assemblie wherein everie particular church hath not interest and power; nor is there anything done but they are, if not actually, yet virtually called to consent unto it.”<sup>1</sup> This is presbytery in theory, and there is no reason why we should not approximate to the ideal in practice more closely than some recent representations imply, save that we come short of what we ought to be as men and as Christians, and that would suffice to mar any form of government that could be devised by the wit of men.

<sup>1</sup> *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland, 1641*, pp. 60, 64, 65.