

well has this plan worked in securing funds for the education of candidates, that the Board has not found it necessary to make any special appeal to the churches." This is very gratifying progress. But, under these circumstances, why should not the amount paid to candidates be increased? Theological students receive from the Board only \$120 a year. But this is by no means sufficient for their support. They must necessarily procure additional aid from some source, unless they have funds of their own. The Board might now safely trust the churches so far as to allow \$150 to Theological students, \$120 to students in College, and \$100 to those in Academies and private schools.

ARTICLE V.

THE CHURCH A SPIRITUAL POWER.

["by a Georgia pastor"]

The writer of this article was a member of the last General Assembly. The only great drawback to a complete satisfaction in attending its sessions, was due to the want of time for a full discussion of many important questions of church polity, which sprang up in the course of business. It seems to happen, unavoidably, that the ecclesiastical matters of highest interest arise for disposal in such a body towards the close of that period beyond which members usually listen with ill-concealed impatience to lengthened argumentation. Hence the principal amount of intellectual labor, called forth during the two weeks now commonly allotted to the existence of a General Assembly, is expended upon routine business alone; leaving new questions of church theory or church management, or new phases of old and established policies, to find what room they may amid the fag ends of the discussions upon reports of standing committees. It has accordingly come to pass, in these last days, that the press is laid under contribution for the ventilation of the most grave and vital subjects connected with a

thorough understanding of the true nature and true mission of the church. On some accounts this is as well. It affords ample space for elaborate thought. It is calculated to enlist the mind of the entire church, in setting forth to the people well-considered views of truth. Its effect is, to keep the hearts of God's people awake to the theoretical differences which may yet divide opinion, and to lead them to long for the period when all the leading thinkers in the church shall see eye to eye. Not that controversy among us often assumes an angry tone. It is impossible to avoid giving thanks to God that there is so much good feeling amid so much fervor of discussion. It is evident that all the great minds of our church are united in their views of fundamental doctrine and of long-established ecclesiastical order. The only striking divisions of sentiment have reference to the best modes which wisdom may suggest for carrying out and making efficient the peculiarities of our ecclesiastical standards of faith and practice. Or, if there be an exception to this remark, it is now beginning to be apparent in the case of that one subject which, just broached in the late Assembly, is now fairly launched upon the sea of debate. We allude to the subject which, in one of its aspects, was introduced to the notice of a thrilled and enraptured house at a closing hour of the session by a distinguished Southern divine. This eloquent debater embraced the only opportunities that were given to announce a doctrine, not new, indeed, but most important, and comparatively novel to the rising generation of Christians. He brought into a clear light the proposition that the Church of God is exclusively a *spiritual* organization, and can wield none but a *spiritual* power. This proposition has been ably combated in the *Princeton Review*, and excited general interest throughout the Church. And no wonder that it has awakened attention; for it expresses a fundamental doctrine which is fruitful in consequences, that wise men are bound to consider. We know of nothing, indeed, more important, at the present day than a final settlement of the question: *what is the true nature of the Church?* And if the present generation of Bible students

can succeed in placing upon sure grounds the answer to this long-vexed inquiry, they will have performed a service for the race of the very highest kind. Different minds are differently constituted; enjoy more or less of the white light of Scripture truth; have broader or narrower margins of prejudice; are capable of taking wider or more confined views of a great subject; are possessed of much or little of the spirit of dogmatism. And, by consequence, there will probably be shades of opinion upon such a subject, which can never entirely fade into each other. But yet we may hope for such a substantial and unantagonistic uniformity in this as in the other important matters of our Church belief. In the meantime good men can, in the fear of God, agree to differ.

We have our own convictions as to the whole subject, which, while they are not beyond the possibilities of revision and change, seem to ourselves very settled and secure. These convictions are not of recent growth. They have been long ingrained in the very constructure of our thoughts, since the first day when we could say of them, *these* are the thoughts which, having been tried by Scripture and history, will do to leave undisturbed, and are strong enough to be built upon. We will, therefore, never forget our feelings, when that distinguished Carolinian, whose utterances had every right to a hearing on the part of thinking Christians, made so bold, so eloquent a declaration of his principles in the above named speech. We felt that he was giving life to our own cherished opinions. We felt that he was inaugurating a new era in church politics—an era that would carry us on, by a wide step, in the road of true progress. We imagined that we could hear the fetters fall from the limbs of our beloved Church, and thought that we saw the approaching day when she would appear to the world buoyant with the springing muscles of a freedom from worldly entanglements, which would soon carry her to the glories of her millennial conquests. Perhaps our imagination was too ardent. Perhaps we were too much carried away by the force of exciting oratory. But no! Every hour of subsequent reflection has only confirmed us in

the opinions which were adopted years ago; but which were, on the occasion alluded to, clothed with a fresh vitality, and beheld in the revealing light of a new importance.

The resolutions which gave occasion to this announcement of the doctrine of the exclusive spirituality of the church, were very modestly and ably introduced by a highly respected elder, who has long been identified with the cause of African colonization. This gentleman simply asked the Assembly to do what previous Assemblies had substantially done. He urged a recommendation of a cause which lay very near his own heart, and which doubtless lies very near the hearts of a large portion of Christian ministers and people. The only question which could arise with regard to such a recommendation, had no reference to the abstract merits of the colonization society. It was purely a question of principle, and was seen to strike far deeper than the matter which suggested it. The principle involved related to the very nature of the church considered as the body of Christ, and held in its embrace all other societies or organizations whose policy is worldly-wise, but whose general aims may be considered as not inconsistent with Scripture morality. It is a principle, therefore, which has many practical bearings, and is either a most useful or a most pernicious one. We do not hesitate to declare our conviction that it is a highly injurious principle—the principle that the church of God is ever to act in a capacity other than her *purely spiritual* capacity. We believe that its legitimate operation would be to remove the church from those Scriptural foundations which it is her glory to occupy, and to degrade her authority, as the earth's divinely appointed ruling *power*, down to the low rank of a far-clashing worldly *expediency*. We have been accustomed to regard the church as an organization essentially different from all others known to human history, and that the great shining point of this difference is her distinctive and undisturbed *spirituality*. She is entirely a creature of God, instituted for a single, definite, unmistakable purpose—that of accomplishing the divine glory in securing the execution of the divine plan of saving mercy among men. The *mode* for the accomplishment of this grand

end is itself as much a part of the plan of salvation as is any other conceivable portion of it. And this mode, being the instrumentality of the church, ought no more to be disturbed than the mode of the incarnation itself. The entire plan is one mighty piece, and the organization of a *church*, with its ministry, its ordinances, its courts, is inextricably interwoven into its very texture, and is consequently as much a *spiritual* organization as the plan itself is a spiritual plan. Otherwise there will appear the inconsistency of executing, by an agency not purely spiritual, a plan that cannot be conceived of as anything but purely spiritual. If the whole of Christianity be spiritual, then every separate part of it must be. If revelation be spiritual, if Christ's mission be spiritual, if apostolic labors were spiritual, what must the church be, whose object is to publish that revelation, illustrate that mission, continue those labors? Having begun in the spirit, will ye end in the flesh?

We will now grant that such an argument as this does not meet the whole question, because, it is indefinite and liable to more than one interpretation. But it is vague only for the reason that the word "spiritual" needs a definition. What, then, do we mean when we speak of the church as a spiritual body? We need not permit this interrogatory to involve us in the discussion of the question, *what is the church?* For we mean by "the church" all that our doctrinal standards affirm it to be. It is that body of organized believers who, in their collective capacity, give visibility to the body of Christ. But do we exclude the *children* of believers from membership in this church? Far from it. It seems to us as perfectly clear, that we cannot maintain our doctrine of infant baptism unless we contend for that infant membership which is the blessed forerunner of paedobaptism, and which contains so much of the meaning and explanation of that divine ordinance. We, however, are prepared to affirm, that we are to view the children of believers as themselves believers, through the faith of their parents. So that it will stand true that the church is nothing other than a body of *believers*; the baptized offspring having the same right to look forward to final salvation, through the training of church ordinances, as have their parents—a salvation of which

they will come short only by a want of proper fidelity on the part of those parents, and of the officers who administer those ordinances. The more the reader will examine this representation of the church-attitude of baptized children, the more will he, we think, be convinced of its consistency with the general views which we, as Presbyterians, hold upon this great branch of doctrine. It does not, then, disturb our conceptions of the church's spirituality, by introducing the necessity for a purely adult membership. The entire membership is a unit. They are all alike believers. The only difference between the two classes is, that the one believe for themselves, and the other are represented by those who have a Scripture warrant to believe for them, with such a belief as must ripen into a personal faith, by a close adherence to covenanted vows all around.

Leaving this, therefore, let us enquire as to the sense in which the church, as composed of this two-sided unit of believing members, is exclusively *spiritual*. In prosecuting this enquiry within the brief space allotted us, it will be well to give the whole matter distinctness, by laying down a brief series of propositions.

1. The objects of the church's existence as an organized body, are easily understood. They are two-fold. In general terms, the church exists for the sake of its own members, and for the further sake of a still impenitent world. As to the former, it is the earthly school of Christ, where believers are to be instructed and governed, and fitted for higher and higher gospel labors. As to the latter, it is the depository and dispenser of saving truth to mankind at large through the prescribed channels of preaching, sacramental administrations, and all other modes by which the news of salvation may be published in accordance with the appliances which the particular times and circumstances may furnish. There can be no doubt that the church is, in a most important sense, the mouth-piece of Christ for purposes of sanctification within itself, and of regeneration without.

2. In every proper sense of the word, the only Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ. She must, accordingly, move by His supreme direction, and by His alone. As He

thinks so must she think. As He commands so must she command. As He teaches so must she teach. All her vitality rests in Him. From Him is communicated the whole force of her will, and by Him impressed every peculiarity of her character. Otherwise, there is no meaning in numerous passages of Scripture, which speak of believers both individually in their separate persons, and collectively in their church capacity, as being connected with Him as the parent vine, as the living rock, as the all in all. What a clear truth that is which shines through all the Scriptures—Christ is the only *Prophet* and the only *King*, in whom are all the treasures of nature, grace and glory, and whose illness which He outpours upon the people whom He has bought with his blood, is the fullness of the Godhead. How unmistakable is the image which the apostle presents when he tells us that we are to grow up into Christ as that head from which *all the body* is to derive its gracious increase. And with what urgency of affectionate entreaty does he warn the church in Colosse against those beguilers who would persuade Christ's body to let go its vital union to its head.

3. It is a historical certainty that this glorious head is no longer upon earth in its visible majesty. Christ has thought it expedient to remove His headship to Heaven. He no longer moves among men as the light of the world, in His fleshly presence. But He made provision for filling the gap which so appalled his disciples when He spake of his approaching demise. The church was not to be left a headless trunk. Christ's crucifixion was not her decapitation. His absence was to be compensated by the constant agency of the invisible Spirit, to be given for this very purpose by the Father and Son, and to rule in the ascended Lord's name with mighty power. His office is to carry "the things of Christ" to the souls of believers for their sanctification, and to the souls of the impenitent for their regeneration. And, indeed, in view of this office, the Holy Ghost was engaged from the first in opening to the human family the blessings of a predetermined salvation. He was at the laying of the foundations of the earth itself. He garnished the Heavens which publish the

Divine glory to man. He inspired the sacred writers, whose calling it was to till those words of God which would have the effect of gathering together a church, and of preparing the world for Christ, and of facilitating the actual reception of the Savior in the heart by faith. He, in brief, has all along been the author of the kingdom of God *within* the souls of men. And He it is, who now, beyond all dispute, resides in believers forming Christ as their hope of glory, and breathing through all their being the very mind and temper of Christ.

4. The Holy Spirit being the author of those Scriptures from which all the features of our church organization, are obtained; being the opener of the human soul to receive the truths of these Scriptures as regenerating and sanctifying knowledge; and being the constant in-resident agency whose influential power ever guides and moulds the subjects of His own imparted grace; it follows that the church has no power other than that which the spirit communicates to her through her own members. And it is in *this* view that we denominate the church a "*spiritual*" body. She is so simply because she is filled with the spirit of God. Her heart beats with the exclusive energies of the Holy Ghost. In Him she has all her life, because in Him she is the body and bride of Christ. Apart from this spirit she is nothing but a cold statue, or rather a decaying corpse.

5. The Church can do nothing which the Holy Ghost has not authorized and empowered her to do. That His governing presence within her determines her work, is as clear as a sun-beam—and determines it to be altogether, and exclusively, a spiritual work. That is, her office among men can go no farther in its functions than the limits of the offices of the Spirit Himself. She dare not pass beyond the lines which this, her supreme lawgiver, has marked for her in defining His own place in the scheme of redemption. And it is sufficient for the purpose of a good argument to say, that the offices of the Holy Ghost are all comprised in the modes which He has adopted for giving "power and demonstration" to the revealed word of God. This "word" becomes, under the teachings of the indwelling spirit, the Church's unalterable constitution.

This word contains the whole strength and compass of those principles which are the life and power of her entire influence. Now, what is this word? How do you characterize it? For what great end was it given? What is its one mighty burden—its transcendently sweet refrain, ever recurring? Its object is the display of the Divine glory—in the one single department of God's works—that glorious department which outshines and outreaches every other; where is opened up, through all the varieties of illustration, the divine way of an effectual salvation of man from the dominion of sin and the pains of hell. This is the constant lesson of those Scriptures, out of whose teachings the Spirit Himself does not go in His ordinary influences upon mankind. In a thousand ways—through the differing and yet concordant voices of two dispensations, extending to all time past, and intended to stretch over all time to come—the Bible sets forth nothing but “Christ and Him crucified.” True it touches upon the history of many nations; borrows much of its vigorous imagery from the manners and customs of several ages of the world; true, it imparts the knowledge, in a general way, of arts and sciences and governments; makes reference to existing evils as it sweeps along through the centuries. It does this, and more. But still it never loses sight of the great theme of redemption. In fact, what are those subjects of transient reference abounding throughout the Scriptures, but the verdant banks between whose long lines of changing beauties the one mighty volume of salvation pours its masses of living waters? These beauties the waters themselves create. They are not separate objects of regard. They are indissolubly connected with the vivifying currents of salvation. And it is in vain that an argument is drawn from the Bible references to other subjects than the direct one of the way to eternal life, to the propriety of preaching upon every theme that may stand connected with the movements of the church, ever so remotely. If, therefore, the church would go no further than the Spirit, whose organ she is, she must not step aside from a distinct and full proclamation of salvation by the atoning blood of Jesus, and the efficacious power of the Holy Ghost; in doing which she may employ,

indeed, every ingenuity of illustration, and every variety of appeal, and every appropriate reference of learning. She is both daring and presumptuous when she presents to her own eyes, or to the world, any other subject than the rich, exhaustless, ever-timely subject of individual salvation and sanctification. She is so, because in doing that she is passing beyond the limits which the Spirit has assigned to His own personal agency. It does seem perfectly obvious that the spiritual bride of Christ must reflect no glory but that of her Lord. And, inasmuch as His glory consists in the wonders of redeeming love, her every utterance and attitude, her every act of legislation and administration of law ought to be a representation of the manifold entreaties of this love to a sinful world and a partially sanctified self. Her place is at every corner, upon every highway, in every busy mart or quiet scene of life—there to publish the work and passion and various attractiveness of Christ. Her labor of preaching in her ten thousand pulpits; of exegetical criticism in all the midnight studies of her servants; of illustrative research through the histories and sciences of earth; of her private entreaties; of all her domestic and sabbath-school and literary effort; the whole of her multifarious work has, can have, but one object, to carry Christ and His salvation to the understandings and consciences and affections of a lost race. She is the Redeemer's faithful witness, who is to tell all that she knows of His grace.

6. Furthermore. The Church is to do an exclusively spiritual work, not alone, because she is so related to the Holy Ghost as to be utterly forbidden to put any other words in those "living epistles," which are constructed of human hearts, than such as He has already written in the look of Revelation. It is her duty to do so also, because when she shall have accomplished the work of the Holy Ghost, she will have done for mankind all that mankind has needed for its complete good. For when the doctrines of grace are preached in their power and fullness, every truth is preached which can contribute to human weal and to the very highest ends of human existence. In the Gospel deliverances upon the great issues connected with redemption from guilt and sin, are contained and declared every

15

valuable hope of the race, whether it looks along the line of a continued progress in civilization, or whether it looks along the brighter path of a blessed immortality. There is no desirable good which is not wrapped up in the pardon of sin and the consequent indwelling of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing worthy of a comparison with the possession of that holiness which makes of the human heart a temple of God. As God has proclaimed himself the greatest lover of man, by furnishing him with a highway which leads from earthly mindedness to heavenly mindedness, so does the church proclaim herself the greatest benefactor of mankind, by employing all her ordinances to extend and enforce the knowledge of that gracious word in whose height that highway is revealed. Upon the ground, therefore, of a supreme benevolence, is the church bound to confine herself to the exclusive exhibitions of redeeming grace to the otherwise miserable and hopeless race. And it is in view of this insight into the duty of the Church, that we say she can have no motive to look about for any other means than those ordained by the wisdom and love of Heaven, for the purpose of furthering the interests of humanity. She is complete in herself for the doing of that stupendous work which, being done, embraces all that God has intended for the blessedness of man. Religion is the world's all in all.

7. Take now a step further. It has been the presence of Christianity, working itself onward towards its final triumphs by means of church ordinances, that has blessed the world with all the height it ever enjoyed for the right understanding of its own relations to time. The torches of truth, held on high by the hands of banded Christian men, have led mankind to see what it needed for the amelioration of its condition in this life. Hence, it is one of the plainest teachings of all history, that all those organizations whose end has been to benefit larger or smaller portions of the race, were the result of the diffused teachings of the Bible, as, by the appointed means, it has been busy in pointing *first* to the "kingdom of God." And as one people after another have embraced the supreme spiritualities of the Gospel, in that proportion have "these other things been added unto them." It is only in countries

where the church is lifting up her voice of instruction as to heavenly things, that you find men entertaining thoughts of organizing social reform societies, whose first end is a temporal good. This has given rise to the colonization society, to the temperance society, *et id omne genus*. Their mother is the church so far as they mean good to men. But how has she become their mother? Only indirectly. She has filled her members with the spirit of charity; she has diffused abroad the true idea of benevolence; she has impressed men with the necessity of helping each other to better and better things, by her publication of their mutual dependence and universal brotherhood. These benevolent societies are the hem of the church's working garment. They are the feebler echoes of that voice of hers, which sends through all society the instructions pertaining to the highest reform of all, the reform of the heart. As she preaches the things that are spiritual, men catch the lessons of carnal wisdom, which they embody in organizations, whose ends are more or less moral and praiseworthy. These are little salvations caught from the great and only true one. These are overflowing from the immense treasury of human blessings, at whose fountain the church sits. But she is no more bound to cease from her higher work for the purpose of commending these lower results of it, than she is to set about the enterprise of *directly* securing them. She is just to let them alone, having the confidence that her own individual members, acting as citizens and philanthropists, in connection with others not members of her body, will carry them on. Or, rather, she is to help them to their ends by continuing to diffuse among men everywhere, those same lessons, the perusal of which gave rise to the idea of those outside organizations; and *this* will give them all the fostering care they can ever require from her. We think that this is very evident, and is a solution of many practical difficulties in the premises.

8. It cannot be denied that the church has the right to rebuke all kinds of sins, and to enjoin upon the consciences of men their relative duties. It is true that she may rebuke magistrates, may arraign parents at her bar, may instruct masters and servants in their mutual duties, and reprove them for

every neglect of their obligations. That is, in other words, the church may directly do all that her position as the world's spiritual adviser may permit her to do. But surely it is one thing so to proclaim salvation as to involve in the proclamation a reference to the thousand forms of human wickedness as they appear in individuals, or classes, or communities, or as they may appear in their opposition to her appropriate work; and quite another thing to so identify herself with human organizations, as to feel justified in recommending them as part and parcel of her own power for good. In thus recommending what is purely a human work (although springing, it may be, from the thoughts of the very best of men), she recommends much that is good; granted. But she also approves of many things that are evil; for no organization whose pattern has been moulded in the human mind, is unmixedly good. And besides, she may be guilty of recommending a society, or a movement, which does by no means receive the universal approbation of her members. Has she a right thus to impose upon their consciences that which they find nowhere urged upon them in their Bibles? In other words, has she a right to do what the *Spirit* has not done?

We say all this in full view of the certainty that we will be told that the church, when through her authorized courts she recommends to her people and to all the world these so-called benevolent societies, does nothing more than merely *recommend* them. It will be said that she does not give the sanction of her spiritual authority to such enterprises; but simply declares that, for the purposes of this organization, they are good things. It will be said that she by no means identifies herself with them, that she does not lean upon them, that she builds them not into her spiritual structure. And we will be told many other things with reference to the expediency of letting out the voice of the church in furtherance of the great moral movements of the day. Now, to say nothing (and how much might be said?) of the extreme danger of admitting these apologies, on the ground of their opening a wide door to the admission into our church courts of all sorts of societies whose friends may wish for them an ecclesiastical baptism,

none of these answers are to the point on another score. Their authors forget what our highest church court is—that it is the church, there in her organized and most extensive visibility. They, therefore, lose sight of the fact, that any recommendation coming down to us from a General Assembly, is an utterance of the voice of the Spirit; as much so, certainly, as if the entire membership were there to give their voices in their proper persons. Is not this the theory of our church deliverances? Are they not supposed to be the audible voice of the indwelling Spirit? Is our ecclesiastical legislation in any other sense human than as it is embodied in human language and pervaded by unavoidable human infirmities? Do not our church courts, in all their actions, endeavor to get as near as possible to the practical perfection of their fundamental organization, viz: that they are organs of the Holy Ghost? Surely this is so. Otherwise they would be nothing more than assemblies of citizens, convened for the purpose of giving expression to any views which they may, as such, choose to express. But was this the nature of that court whose actions are recorded in the 15th of Acts? Did that Synod presume to utter any voice not breathed through their lips by the Holy Ghost? It inevitably follows, therefore, that any such recommendation as we are considering, is more than a simple expression of opinion. It is authoritative law. Every recommendation is an express sanction.

9. Finally. It cannot be true that an individual member, or an individual minister, is to be regarded in the same light as a church court, in the matter before us. The individuals composing our church courts can assuredly perform a great number of actions which these courts collectively may not perform. Else there is no meaning at all in our laws establishing these courts. The Spirit does, in them, speak with more authority and more solemnity than He ever utters himself through a ruling or preaching elder, because, among other reasons, their collective wisdom is supposed to be able to contain a larger fullness of spiritual influences, and because to them, as law executors, are given the express authority to bear “the keys of the kingdom.”

But we have said enough for the distinct conveyance of our ideas as to what is meant by the exclusive *spirituality* of the

church. She is Christ's body, filled with Christ's Spirit, of which she is the more or less imperfect organ in declaring the pure and unadulterated word of salvation to mankind. It is, of course, freely granted that the church may sometimes be thrown into circumstances where she will have to contend for the very ground on which to build and extend herself; as when threatened with the domination of Papacy by a corrupt government; as when our forefathers felt compelled to throw themselves into the struggle for independence; as when time and again, the spouse of Christ has lifted her voice of warning against the persecutors of her Head in different parts of the world. But such is not the normal condition of the church. We cannot but believe that the church is, in accordance with her high origin and the qualities of her stupendous enterprise, the great Power, under the controlling management of an indwelling Spirit, whose operations are intended to mould all earthly things in her pattern by the use of a purely spiritual fire brought to bear directly upon individual men. We have always shuddered at the perusal of those dark passages of history which point us to the spouse of Christ associating herself with mere human policies, and bedraggling her holy garments through the staining soil of those worldly expedients which have courted her by appearing to do or further her work. We think that the entangling alliances which she has been tempted to make with voluntary associations of various kinds, have been made because she has not kept in view the fact, that *her* power is superior to all other moral agencies whatsoever; and that her duty is, not to borrow a transient and imaginary influence from them, but to infuse, by the appointed way of operating alone upon the hearts of individual men, her life into them. She is not to resort to any human dexterities of statesmanlike management. She is not to go about, seeking to bolster herself up by leaning, for a single hour's influence, or for the acquisition of a momentary grace of attitude before the world, upon any device of man's authorship. She is independent of all the shifts of mere expediency. Her influence is alone due to the spiritual character which God has impressed upon her, by making her the living temple of the Holy Ghost.