

tery, and of the churches belonging to it, and our brethren of the General Assembly, may know why I shall not be present to perform the service which the ancient usage of that church requires of me.

I am, very truly, yours,

W. L. BRECKINRIDGE.

ART. VI.—*Presbyterianism.*

MUCH time was devoted, at the late meeting of the General Assembly at Rochester, to the discussion of the question, What is Presbyterianism? That question, indeed, had only a remote connection with the subject before the house. That subject was the Boards of the church. These, on the one side, were pronounced to be not only inexpedient, but unscriptural and unlawful; not only useless excrescences, but contrary to the divine rule prescribed in the word of God, and a reproach to our blessed Saviour. We were called upon to reject them as a matter of duty, or forfeit our allegiance to Christ. On the other side, it was contended that the Boards were not only highly useful, as experience had proved, but that they were entirely within the discretion which Christ had granted to his church, and therefore compatible with obedience to his will, and with our allegiance to his authority.

To make out any plausible argument in support of the doctrine that the Boards are anti-scriptural, required, of course, a peculiar theory of Presbyterianism; a theory which should exclude all discretionary power in the church, and tie her down to modes of action prescribed as of divine authority in the word of God. That theory, as propounded by Dr. Thornwell in his first speech on the subject, was understood to embrace the following principles: 1. That the form of government for the church, and its modes of action, are prescribed in the word of God, not merely as to its general principles, but in all its details, as completely as the system of faith or the moral law;

and therefore everything for which we cannot produce a "Thus saith the Lord," is unscriptural and unlawful.

2. Consequently, the church has no more right to create a new office, organ, or organization, for the exercise of her prerogatives or the execution of her prescribed work, than she has to create a new article of faith, or to add a new command to the Decalogue.

3. That the church cannot delegate her powers. She must exercise them herself, and through officers and organs prescribed in the Scriptures. She has no more right to act by a vicar, than Congress has to delegate its legislative power, or a Christian to pray by proxy.

4. That all executive, legislative, and judicial power in the church is in the hands of the clergy, that is, of presbyters, who have the same ordination and office, although differing in functions.

5. That all power in the church is joint, and not several. That is, it can be exercised only by church courts, and not in any case by individual officers.

In opposition to this general scheme, "the brother from Princeton" propounded the following general principles:

1st. That all the attributes and prerogatives of the church arise from the indwelling of the Spirit, and consequently, where he dwells, there are those attributes and prerogatives.

2d. That as the Spirit dwells not in the clergy only, but in the people of God, all power is, *in sensu primo*, in the people.

3d. That in the exercise of these prerogatives, the church is to be governed by principles laid down in the word of God, which determine, within certain limits, her officers and modes of organization; but that beyond those prescribed principles and in fidelity to them, the church has a wide discretion in the choice of methods, organs and agencies.

4th. That the fundamental principles of our Presbyterian system are first, the parity of the clergy; second, the right of the people to a substantive part in the government of the church; and third, the unity of the church, in such sense, that a small part is subject to a larger, and a larger to the whole.

Without attempting any development of these principles, the

remarks of the speaker in reply to Dr. Thornwell's first speech, were directed to the single point on which the whole question in debate turned. That was, Is the church tied down in the exercise of her prerogatives, and in the performance of her work, to the organizations or organs prescribed in the New Testament? In other words, is everything relating to the government and action of the church laid down in detail in the word of God, so that it is unlawful to employ any organs or agencies not therein enjoined? If this is so, then the Boards are clearly unlawful; if it is not so, the having them, or not having them is a matter of expediency. Dr. Thornwell, in his reply, instead of answering the arguments on that point, which was really the only point properly at issue, confined himself almost exclusively to attempting to prove that his brother from Princeton "was no Presbyterian." In doing this he first assailed the position that where the Spirit is, there the church is; or, as it was really stated on the floor of the Assembly, that the attributes and prerogatives of the church arise from the indwelling of the Spirit; and, therefore, where the Spirit is, there are those attributes and prerogatives; and secondly, he attempted to show that the parity of the clergy, the right of the people to take part in the government of the church, and the unity of the church are not the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism. As this question has a general interest, it may be proper to consider it more fully than respect for the time of the Assembly permitted in the presence of that body. A single statement of principles was all that was then deemed allowable.

As to the first of the above-mentioned principles, it was not presented as anything peculiar to Presbyterianism. It is simply an axiom of evangelical religion, admitted and advocated in every age of the church by all opponents of the ritual or hierarchical theory. As no man is a Christian unless the Spirit of Christ dwells in him, so no body of men is a church, except so far as it is organized, animated and controlled by the same Spirit. We may be bound to recognize men as Christians who are not really such, and we may be bound to recognize churches who are, in fact, not governed by the Spirit. But in both cases they are assumed to be what they profess.

We might as well call a lifeless corpse a man, as a body without the Spirit of God a church. The one may be called a dead church, as a lifeless human body is called a dead man. Nevertheless the Spirit makes the church, as the soul makes the man. The Bible says that the church is a temple, because it is the habitation of God through the Spirit. It is the body of Christ, because animated by the Spirit of Christ. It is said to be one, because the Spirit is one. "For," says the apostle, "as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." It is the baptism, or indwelling of the Spirit, therefore, which constitutes the church one body. And as (so far as our present state of existence is concerned,) where the soul is, there the body is, so in like manner, where the Spirit is, there is the church, and where the Spirit is not, the church is not. The motto inscribed on the banner which the early evangelical fathers raised against the assumption of ritualists was, *UBI SPIRITUS DEI, IBI ECCLESIA*. That banner Popes and Prelatists, Patriarchs and Priests have for a thousand years striven in vain to trample in the dust. It has been handed down from one band of witnesses for the truth to another, until it now waves over all evangelical Christendom. The dividing line between the two great contending parties in the church universal, is precisely this—Is the church in its essential idea an external body held together by external bonds, so that membership in the church depends on submission to a hierarchy? or is it a spiritual body owing its existence and unity to the indwelling of the Spirit, so that those who have the Spirit of God are members of the church or body of Christ? The Papists say we are not in the church, because we are not subject to the Pope; we say that we are in the church if the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. Of course Dr. Thornwell believes all this as firmly as we do. He has as fully and clearly avowed this doctrine as any man among us. In the very latest published production of his pen, he says, "The idea of the church, according to the Reformed conception, is the complete realization of the decree of election. It is the whole body of the elect considered as united to Christ their Head. As actually exist-

ing at any given time, it is that portion of the elect who have been effectually called to the exercise of faith, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost. It is, in other words, the whole body of existing believers. According to this conception, none are capable of being church members but the elect, and none are ever, in fact, church members, but those who are truly renewed. The church is, therefore, the communion of saints, the congregation of the faithful, the assembly of those who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. That this conception is fundamental in all the Reformed Confessions, and among all the Reformed theologians worthy of the name, we will not insult the intelligence of our readers by stopping to prove. The church was co-extensive with faith. As true faith in the heart will manifest itself by the confession of the mouth, it is certain that the children of God, wherever they have the opportunity, will be found professing their faith; and as there is no method of searching the heart, and discriminating real from false professors but by the walk, all are to be accepted as true believers whose lives do not give the lie to their pretensions. The body of professors, therefore, is to be accepted as the church of Christ, because the truly faithful are in it. The gospel is never preached without converting some—these will profess their faith, and will vindicate to any society the name of a church. As to those professors who are destitute of faith, they are not properly members of the church; they are wolves among sheep; tares among the wheat; warts and excrescences upon the body. The visible church is, accordingly, the society or congregation of those who profess the true religion; among whom the gospel is faithfully preached, and the sacraments duly administered. And it is simply because such a society cannot be destitute of genuine believers that it is entitled to the name of the church. Profession must be accepted in the judgment of men as equivalent to the possession of faith, and the body of professors must pass for saints, until hypocrites and unbelievers expose themselves.”*

This is the idea of the church almost *totidem verbis*, which

* *Southern Presbyterian Review* for April, 1860, p. 15.

was presented years ago in this journal. Dr. Thornwell derived his doctrine from the same source from which we drew ours, viz. the Scriptures and the Confessions of the Protestant churches, and writings of the Reformed theologians. This is the doctrine which was presented in few words on the floor of the General Assembly, where it was stated that the indwelling of the Spirit constitutes the church, so that where the Spirit is, there the church is. Dr. Thornwell, however, then denounced that doctrine. He said, speaking of his opponent, “His principle is no, no, no Presbyterianism; no, no, no churchism. He alleges that the church is where the Holy Ghost is. Moderator, is not the Holy Ghost in the heart, in the soul of the individual? Who can conceive of, where is the authority for believing that the Holy Ghost dwells in the church, in any other sense than as he dwells in the hearts of those who are members of the church?” He went on at some length to represent the doctrine that where the Spirit is, there the church is, as destroying the visibility of the church, resolving it into an impalpable invisible communion. “It is idle,” he argued, “to say that when the apostle says God ‘has set in the church,’ he is speaking of the invisible church. Where would the apostles, and pastors, and teachers, &c., be in an invisible church? The thing is preposterous, and yet to such resorts have good men been driven, in order to get rid of the force of the arguments which go to establish our views.” “The brother from Princeton,” against whom all this was directed, had not said one word against the visibility of the church; he had said nothing on the idea of the church, further than was contained in the simple statement, that the Spirit stands in the same relation to the church that the soul does to the body, as its organizing principle, and the source of its attributes and prerogatives. Dr. Thornwell fully believes that doctrine. He taught it clearly and publicly in the month of April last. That he denounced it as preposterous in the month of May is to be accounted for only by the exigencies of debate. It would be hard to hold a lawyer responsible for all the arguments he may urge for his client. Dr. Thornwell had undertaken to prove *that* to be no Presbyterianism

which he and every other Presbyterian in the land fully believed. It was a mere passing phase of thought.

It has been strangely inferred that if we hold that all the attributes and prerogatives of the church arise from the indwelling of the Spirit, we must also hold that nothing relating to the organization of the church is prescribed in the word of God. It might as well be inferred from the fact that the soul fashions and informs the human body, that the body may at one time have the form of a man, and at another, the form of a beast. There are fixed laws assigned by God, according to which all healthful and normal development of the body is regulated. So it is with regard to the church. There are fixed laws in the Bible, according to which all healthful development and action of the external church are determined. But as within the limits of the laws which control the development of the human body, there is endless diversity among different races, adapting them to different climes and modes of living, so also in the church. It is not tied down to one particular mode of organization and action, at all times and under all circumstances. Even with regard to doctrinal truth, we may hold that the Spirit dwells in the believer as a divine teacher, and that all true divine knowledge comes from his inward illumination, without denying that a divine, authoritative rule of faith is laid down in the word of God, which it is impossible the inward teaching of the Spirit should ever contradict. We may believe that the indwelling Spirit guides the children of God in the path of duty, without at all questioning the authority of the moral law as revealed in the Bible. A Christian, however, may believe and do a thousand things not taught or commanded in the Scriptures. He cannot rightfully believe or do anything contrary to the word of God, but while faithful to their teachings and precepts, he has a wide field of liberty of thought and action. It is precisely so with regard to the organization of the church. There are certain things prescribed, to which every church ought to conform, and many things as to which she is at liberty to act as she deems best for God's glory, and the advancement of his kingdom. All we contend for is that everything is not prescribed; that every mode of organization or action is not

either commanded or forbidden; that we must produce a "Thus saith the Lord" for everything the church does. We must indeed be able to produce a "Thus saith the Lord" for everything, whether a truth, or a duty, or a mode of ecclesiastical organization or action, which we make obligatory on the conscience of other men. But our liberty of faith and action beyond the prescriptions of the word of God, is the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and which no man shall take from us.

What we hold, therefore, is, that the leading principles thus laid down in Scripture regarding the organization and action of the church, are the parity of the clergy, the right of the people, and the unity of the church. With respect to these principles, two things were asserted on the floor of the Assembly. First, that they are *jure divino*. That is, that they are clearly taught in the word of God, and intended to be of universal and perpetual obligation. By this is not meant either that they are essential to the being of the church, for nothing can be essential to the church which is not essential to salvation; nor is it meant that these principles may not, under certain circumstances, be less developed or called into action than in others. The right of the people, for example, to take part in the government of the church, may be admitted, and yet the exercise of that right be limited by the ability to exercise it. We do not deny the right of the people in civil matters, when we deny the exercise of that right to minors, to felons, or to idiots. The other position assumed was, that the three principles just mentioned are the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism, in such sense as that those who hold those principles in their true intent are Presbyterians, and that those who deny them forfeit their claim to be so regarded.

That the above-mentioned principles are, in the sense stated, *jure divino*, may be proved, as we think, in very few words. If the Holy Spirit, as dwelling in the church, is the source of its several prerogatives, it follows that there can be no offices in the church, of divine authority, to which he does not call its members by imparting to them the appropriate gift. The apostle informs us, that the Spirit distributes his gifts to each one as he wills. Apart from those sanctifying influences com-

mon to all the children of God, by which they are incorporated into the body of Christ, he made some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Some had the gift of speaking with tongues, others the gift of healing, others the gift of miracles, others of government, others of helpers. Of these offices thus created, some were extraordinary and temporary, others permanent. Of those connected with the ministry of the word, were the apostles, prophets, and presbyters. The question, therefore, whether there is any permanent class or order of ministers higher than these presbyters, depends on the question, whether the apostolic and prophetic offices were permanent or temporary. It is admitted that in the apostolic church the apostles and prophets were superior to presbyters. If, therefore, we have now apostles and prophets in the church, then there are still two orders of the clergy above ordinary ministers. But if there are now no such offices, then the parity of the clergy is a necessary consequence. That the apostolic and prophetic offices were temporary, is rendered certain from the fact that the peculiar gifts which made an apostle or a prophet are no longer imparted. An apostle was a man endued with plenary knowledge of the gospel by immediate revelation, and who was rendered infallible in the communication of that knowledge by the gift of inspiration. A prophet was a man who received partial revelations and occasional inspiration.

It is not necessary that we should stop to prove that such were the gifts of the apostles and prophets. It is proved by the fact that they claimed them, that they exercised them, that their claim was divinely authenticated and universally admitted, and that the possession of those gifts was essential to their authority as teachers and rulers, to which all men were required to submit on the pain of perdition. It requires no proof that these gifts are no longer possessed by any order of men in the church, and therefore it requires no further proof that the apostolic and prophetic offices are no longer extant. This conclusion as to the temporary nature of those offices is confirmed: 1. By the consideration that there is no command to continue them. 2. That there is no specification of the qualifications to be required in those who sought them. 3. That there is no record of their continuation. They disappeared from the stage

of history as completely as the prophets, judges, and high priests of the Old Testament economy. On the other hand, the gifts of teaching and ruling, which constituted a presbyter, are continued; the command to ordain such officers is on record; their qualifications are minutely laid down; the account of their appointment is found in the Scripture, and they continue in unbroken succession wherever the church is found. These presbyters are therefore the highest permanent officers of the church for which we have any divine warrant. If the church, for special reasons, sees fit to appoint any higher order, such as are found in bishops of the Lutheran church in Europe, and in the superintendents, clothed with presbyterial power, (i. e. the powers of a presbytery,) in the early church of Scotland, this is merely a human arrangement. The parity of the clergy is a matter of divine right. They all hold the same office, and have the same rights, so far as they depend on divine appointment.

As to the right of the people to take part in the government of the church, this also is a divine right. This follows because the Spirit of God, who is the source of all power, dwells in the people, and not exclusively in the clergy; because we are commanded to submit ourselves to our brethren in the Lord; because the people are commanded to exercise this power, and are upbraided when unfaithful or negligent in the discharge of this duty; because the gift of governing or ruling is a permanent gift; and because, in the New Testament we find the brethren in the actual recognized exercise of the authority in question, which was never disputed in the church until the beginning of the dark ages. This right of the people must, of necessity, be exercised through representatives. Although it might be possible in a small congregation for the brotherhood to act immediately, yet in such a city as Jerusalem, where there were five or ten thousand believers, it was impossible that government or discipline should be administered by the whole body of Christians. And when the churches of a province or of a nation, or of all Christendom, united for the decision of questions of general interest, the people must appear by their representatives or not appear at all. Under the Old Testament, in the assembly or congregation of the people, in

the Synagogue and in the Sanhedrim, this principle of representation was by divine appointment universally recognized. By like authority it was introduced into the Christian church as a fundamental principle of its organization. This is the broad, scriptural *jure divino* foundation of the office of ruling elder, an officer who appears with the same credentials, and with equal authority as the minister in all our church-courts, from the session to the General Assembly. The third principle above-mentioned is the unity of the church. This unity is not merely a union of faith and of communion; not merely a fellowship in the Spirit, but a union of subjection, so that one part is subject to a larger, and a larger to the whole. This also is *jure divino*. 1. Because the whole church is made one by the indwelling of the Spirit. 2. Because we are commanded to be subject to our brethren. The ground of this subjection is not proximity in space, nor a mutual covenant or agreement, but the mere fact that they are our brethren, and, therefore, it extends to all brethren. 3. Because in the apostolic, as in the Old Testament church, the whole body of professors of the true religion were thus united as one body. 4. Because by the instinct of Christian feeling the church in all ages has striven after this union of subjection, and recognized its violation as inconsistent with the law of its constitution. This, again, by necessity and divine appointment is a representative union, and hence the provincial, national and oecumenical councils which mark the whole history of the church. We hold, therefore, to a *jure divino* form of church government, so far as these principles go.

The second position assumed in reference to the points above stated was, that those principles constitute the true idea of Presbyterianism. Dr. Thornwell's second speech was devoted to ridiculing and refuting that position. He objected to it as altogether illogical. It was a definition, he said, without any single distinctive characteristic of the subject. Let us look, he said, at these principles. 1st. Parity of the clergy. Why, sir, this is not a distinctive mark of Presbytery. All the evangelical sects except the Episcopal hold to it. 2d. The power of the people. That is not distinctive of Presbyterianism. The Congregationalists carry this further than we do.

3d. The unity of the church. Is this peculiar to us? Is it a peculiar element of our system? Rome holds it with a vehemence which we do not insist upon. "That Presbyterianism!" he exclaimed, "a little of everything and anything, but nothing distinctive."

This is extraordinary logic. And the more extraordinary, considering that Dr. Thornwell had just informed the Assembly that he had studied Aristotle, and every other great master of the science; that he had probably the largest private library of works in that department in the country, and felt prepared to measure swords on that field with any man alive. We do not question either his learning or his skill. We only know that the merest tyro, with logic or without it, can see the fallacy of his argument. He assumes that the only mode of definition is to state the genus of the subject and its specific difference. Thus we define God by saying that he is a Spirit, which states the genus, or class of beings to which he belongs; and we distinguish him from all other spirits by saying he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Another method, however, equally legitimate and equally common, is to enumerate the attributes of the subject which complete or individualize the idea. We may define man to be a rational creature, invested with a material body. Should any professor of logic ridicule this definition, and say it includes nothing distinctive, he would only show that his logic was in abeyance. Should he imitate Dr. Thornwell, he would say, "Rationality is no distinctive characteristic of man. God, angels, and demons are all rational. Neither is a dependent created nature such a characteristic. There are other creatures in the universe besides man. Nor is the possession of an organized body anything peculiar. Birds and beasts have bodies. Here, then, we have a little of everything and anything, and nothing peculiar. Is that a man?" Nevertheless, so long as, in the sphere of our knowledge, man is the only rational creature invested with a living body, the above definition is perfectly logical, all the followers of the Stagirite to the contrary notwithstanding. Now, as the principles above stated, the parity of the clergy, the right of the people to a substantive part in the government of the church, and the subjection of one part of the church to a larger, and a larger to

the whole, are recognized by Presbyterians, and are not found among Papists, Prelatists, and Independents, or any other historical body of Christians, they are, in their combination, the characteristic or distinguishing features of the Presbyterian system.

Dr. Thornwell stated his own as an antagonistic theory of Presbyterianism. 1. That the church is governed by representative assemblies. 2. Those assemblies include two houses, or two elements, the preaching and ruling elder. 3. The parity of the eldership, all elders, preaching and ruling, appearing in our church courts with the same credentials, and having the same rights. 4. The unity of the church, as realized in the representative principle.

It is obvious that these principles do not involve anything to distinguish Dr. Thornwell's system from that advocated on the other side. He entirely overlooked the main point, and the only point in debate. It was asserted that the Boards are unscriptural and unlawful. They are unlawful, because not commanded in Scripture, and everything not commanded is forbidden. In opposition to this, it was said that the principle, that every mode of organization or action is unlawful which is not prescribed in the word of God, is utterly anti-Presbyterian and unscriptural. In his rejoinder, Dr. Thornwell does not say a word on that point, on which the whole argument turned, but devoted all his strength to prove that "the brother from Princeton" is no Presbyterian. Suppose that to be true, what had it to do with the question? Our being no Presbyterian would not prove the Boards to be unlawful. But even as to that subordinate, irrelevant object, the speech was a failure. Every one of his four principles is involved in those stated on the other side. 1. The principle of representation, as we have seen, is of necessity included in the doctrine of the unity of the church, and the subjection of a part to the whole. This theory can be carried out only through representative assemblies. 2. The union of two elements in these church courts is also embraced in the assertion of the right of the people to take part in the government of the church, for this right can only be exercised through their representatives sitting as constituent elements in ecclesiastical

courts. 3. The parity of the elders and ministers in these representative assemblies, is also included in the one system as well as in others. 4. The unity of the church was avowed on both sides, and was not claimed as peculiar to either. This is not an after thought. All these principles were presented years ago, in the tract, "What is Presbyterianism?" and shown to be involved in those which Dr. Thornwell repudiated as any just description of our system.

The true peculiarities of the new theory, Dr. Thornwell left out of view in his rejoinder. Those principles are, 1. A new doctrine concerning ruling elders. 2. The doctrine that all power in the church is joint and not several. 3. That every thing not prescribed in Scripture is forbidden. We shall say a few words on each of these points in their order.

First, as to the eldership. There are only two radically different theories on this subject. According to the one, the ruling elder is a layman; according to the other, he is a clergyman. According to the former, he belongs to a different order from the minister, holds a different office, has a different vocation and ordination. He is not a bishop, pastor, or teacher, but officially a ruler. According to the latter, the reverse is true. The ruling elder belongs to the same order with the minister. He is a bishop, pastor, teacher, and ruler. This is all the minister is. They have, therefore, the same office, and differ only as to their functions, as a professor differs from a pastor, or a missionary from a settled minister. It is to be noticed that the point of difference between these theories is not the importance of the office of ruling elder, nor its divine warrant. According to both views, the office is *jure divino*. The Spirit who calls one man to be a minister calls another to be an elder. The one office is as truly from Christ as the other. Nor do the theories differ as to the parity of elders and ministers in our church courts. Both enter those courts with the same credentials, and have the same right to sit, deliberate and determine. The vote of the one avails as much as that of the other. On all these points, the theories agree. The point of difference between them which is radical, affecting the whole character of our system, relates to the nature of the office of the ruling elder. Is he a clergyman, a

bishop? or is he a layman? Does he hold the same office with the minister, or a different one? According to the new theory the offices are identified. Everything said of presbyters in the New Testament, this theory applies equally to elders and ministers of the word. What constitutes identity of office, if it be not identity of official titles, of qualifications, of vocation, of duties, of ordinations? This new doctrine makes all elders, bishops, pastors, teachers, and rulers. It applies all directions as to the qualifications and duties, as to election and ordination of presbyters, as much to the ruling elder as to the minister of the word. It therefore destroys all official distinction between them. It reduces the two to one order, class, or office. The one has as much right to preach, ordain, and administer the sacraments, as the other. The conclusion cannot by possibility be avoided on the theory that elders are pastors, bishops, and teachers, in the same sense with ministers.

The first objection to this theory is that it is entirely contrary to the doctrine and practice of all the Reformed churches, and especially of our own. In those churches the ruling elder is a layman. He has a different office from the minister. He has different gifts, different training, duties, prerogatives, and ordination. The one is ordained by the minister, the other by the Presbytery. The one ministers in the word and sacraments, the other does not. The one is appointed specially to teach and to preach the gospel; the other to take part in the discipline and government of the church.

Secondly, in thus destroying the peculiarity of the office, its value is destroyed. It is precisely because the ruling elder is a layman, that he is a real power, a distinct element in our system. The moment you dress him in canonicals, you destroy his power, and render him ridiculous. It is because he is not a clergyman, it is because he is one of the people, engaged in the ordinary business of life, separated from the professional class of ministers, that he is what he is in our church courts. Thirdly, This theory reduces the government of the church to a clerical despotism. Dr. Thornwell ridiculed this idea. He called it an argument *ad captandum*. He said it was equal in absurdity to the argument of a hard-shell Baptist, who proved that his sect would universally prevail,

from the text, "The voice of the turtle shall be heard in all the land." Turtles, said the Hard-shell, are to be seen sitting upon logs in all the streams, and as you pass, they plunge into the water, therefore, all men will do the same. Such, said Dr. Thornwell, was the logic of the brother from Princeton. Whatever may be thought of the wit of this illustration, we cannot see that it proves much. Does it prove that all power in our church is not in the hands of ministers and elders? and if elders and ministers are all alike bishops and teachers, all of the same order, all clergymen, does it not follow that all power is in the hands of the clergy? But, says Dr. Thornwell, the people choose these elders. What of that? Suppose slaves had a right to choose (under a veto,) their own masters, would they not be slaves still? If, according to the Constitution of the United States, the President, senators, representatives, heads of departments, judges, marshals, all naval and military men holding commissions, in short, all officers from the highest to the lowest, (except overseers of the poor,) must be clergymen, every one would see and feel that all power was in the hands of the clergy. It would avail little that the people choose these clergymen, if the clergy had the sole right to ordain, that is, to admit into their order. All power, legislative, executive, and judicial, would be in their hands, the right of election notwithstanding. This is the government which the new theory would introduce into the church. This doctrine is, therefore, completely revolutionary. It deprives the people of all substantive power. The legislative, judicial, and executive power, according to our system, is in church courts, and if these courts are to be composed entirely of clergymen, and are close, self-perpetuating bodies, then we have, or we should have, as complete a clerical domination as the world has ever seen. It need hardly be said that our fathers, and especially the late Dr. Miller, did not hold any such doctrine as this. There was no man in the church more opposed to this theory than that venerable man, whose memory we have so much reason to cherish with affectionate reverence. We do not differ from Dr. Miller as to the nature of the office of the ruling elder. The only point of difference between him and us relates to the

method of establishing the divine warrant for the office. He laid stress on one argument, we on another. That is all. As to the importance, nature, and divine institution of the office, we are faithful to his instructions. And this we understand to be the ground which our respected contributor in the April number of this *Review* intended to take. It is only as to the point just indicated that we could sanction dissent from the teachings of our venerated and lamented colleague.

Dr. Thornwell himself, in the last extremity, said that he did not hold the new theory. Then he has no controversy with us, nor we with him, so far as the eldership is concerned. The dispute is reduced to a mere logomachy, if the only question is, whether the ruling elder is a presbyter. Dr. Thornwell asked, If he is not a presbyter, what right has he in the Presbytery? You might as well, he said, put any other good man there. It is on all sides admitted that in the New Testament the presbyters are bishops—how then are we to avoid the conclusion that the ruling elder is a bishop, and therefore the same in office as the minister, and the one as much a clergyman as the other? This is the dilemma in which, as we understood, Dr. Thornwell endeavoured to place Dr. Hodge, when he asked him, on the floor of the Assembly, whether he admitted that the elder was a presbyter. Dr. Hodge rejoined by asking Dr. Thornwell whether he admitted that the apostles were deacons. He answered, No. But, says Dr. Hodge, Paul says he was a *διάκονος*. O, says Dr. Thornwell, that was in the general sense of the word. Precisely so. If the answer is good in the one case, it is good in the other. If the apostles being deacons in the wide sense of the word, does not prove that they were officially deacons, then that elders are presbyters in the one sense, does not prove them to be presbyters in the other sense. We hold, with Calvin, that the official presbyters of the New Testament were bishops; for, as he says, “*Quicumque verbi ministerio funguntur, iis titulum episcoporum [Scriptura] tribuit.*” But of the ruling elders, he adds, “*Gubernatores fuisse existimo seniores ex plebe delectos, qui censuræ morum et exercendæ disciplinæ una cum episcopis præessent.*” *Institutio*, &c. IV. 3. 8. This is the old, healthful, conservative doctrine of the Presbyterian church. Ministers of the word are clergy-

men, having special training, vocation, and ordination; ruling elders are laymen, chosen from the people as their representatives, having, by divine warrant, equal authority in all church courts with the ministers.

The second point of difference between the new and old theories of Presbyterianism is, that all power in the church is joint, and not several. The objection to this doctrine is simply to the word *all*. It is admitted, and always has been admitted, that the ordinary exercise of the legislative, executive, and judicial authority of the church, is in church courts; according to our system, in sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and Assembly. About this there is no dispute. But, on the other hand, it is contended, that according to the theory and practice of our own, and of all other Presbyterian bodies, ordination to the sacred office confers the power or authority not only to preach the gospel, but to collect and organize churches, to administer the sacraments, and in the absence of a session, to decide on the qualifications of candidates for admission to those ordinances; and when need be, to ordain, as is done in the case of ruling elders. This is a power which our ministers and missionaries have, and always must exercise. It can never be denied by any who are not the slaves, instead of being the masters of logic. On this point it is not necessary to enlarge.

The third point of difference between the two systems is the extent to which the liberty of the church extends in matters of government and modes of operation. According to the old, and especially the genuine American form of Presbyterianism, while it is admitted that there is a form of government prescribed or instituted in the New Testament, so far as its general principles or features are concerned, there is a wide discretion allowed us by God, in matters of detail, which no man or set of men, which neither civil magistrates nor ecclesiastical rulers, can take from us. This is part of that liberty with which Christ has made us free, and in which we are commanded to stand fast. The other doctrine is the opposite of this. It is, that every thing that is lawful as to the mode in which the church is to be organized, and as to the methods which she is to adopt in carrying on her work, is laid down in Scripture. It is not enough that it is not forbidden; it is not enough that it is in accord-

ance with the principles laid down in the word of God. Unless it is actually commanded, unless we can put our finger on a "Thus saith the Lord," in its support, it is unlawful. God, it was said, has given the church a particular organization, a definite number of offices, courts, organs, agencies; and for us to introduce any other, or even any new combinations, is an indignity to him, and to his word. On this ground, as we have said, the Boards were pronounced unscriptural. Their abrogation was made a matter of duty. It was urged upon our conscience as demanded by our allegiance to God. It is our firm belief that there were not six men in the Assembly who held this doctrine. There were sixty who voted for some organic change in the Boards, but so far as we know, there were only two who took the ground of this superlative high-churchism. It is utterly repugnant to the spirit of the New Testament, to the practice of the church universal, to the whole character of Protestantism, and especially of our Presbyterianism; it is so preposterous and suicidal, that we have no more fear of its prevalence among us, than that the freemen of this country will become the advocates of the divine right of kings. We have no intention of discussing this question at length, which we deem altogether unnecessary. We shall content ourselves with a few remarks on two aspects of the case.

In the first place, this theory never has been, nor can be carried out, even by its advocates. Consistency would require them to repudiate all organizations, not Boards only, but Committees also, and confine the joint agency of the church to sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies. They hold these only to be divinely instituted organs for joint action. And it is perfectly clear that if these be departed from, or if other agencies be adopted, the whole principle is given up. Accordingly, the first ground assumed by the advocates of the new theory, was that missionary operations could be carried on only by the Presbyteries. The law of God was said to forbid everything else. When this was found impracticable, then it was discovered that a board or court of deacons, was the divinely instituted agency, and the word of God was made to forbid any other. This, however, would not go. Then followed other discoveries, and at last it was found out that a

committee was the thing. God permits a committee, but to institute a board is an act of rebellion. But what is the difference? A committee is no more commanded than a board. The one is as much a delegated body as the other. Both continue as a living organism after the Assembly appointing them is dissolved and dead. We were referred to the Committee of Church Extension as an illustration of the radical difference between the two organizations. The only difference, however, is that one is larger than the other. There is not a single principle involved in the one, which is not involved also in the other.

It may be said, and it was said in the last extremity, that an executive committee appointed directly by the Assembly, is a simpler device than a board, and that the church is limited in her choice of agencies to what is absolutely necessary. But, in the first place, this is an admission that everything necessary is not prescribed in Scripture which is contrary to the theory. In the second place, the Committee of Church Extension, which was held up as the model, is not the simplest possible, by a great deal. A single executive officer is a simpler device than an executive committee, and much more so than a committee of thirty or forty members. In the third place, when it is said we are forbidden to adopt any means not absolutely necessary, the question arises, Necessary for what? For doing the work? or, for doing it in the best and most effectual manner? If the latter, which is the only rational view of the matter, then again the whole principle is abandoned; for it must rest with the judgment of the church to decide what measures are best adapted for her purpose, and this is all the discretion any body desires. It is obvious that the principle advocated by these brethren is one which they themselves cannot carry out. The church is getting tired of such hair-splitting. She is impatient of being harassed and impeded in her great operations by such abstractions. If, however, the principle in question could be carried out, what would be the consequence? Of course we could have no church-schools, colleges, or theological seminaries; no appliances for the education of the heathen, such as all churches have found it necessary to adopt. The boards of directors of

our Seminaries must be given up. No one pretends that they are commanded in Scripture, or that they are absolutely necessary to the education of the ministry. We had educated ministers before Seminaries were thought of. So far as we heard, not a word was said in the Assembly in answer to this *argumentum ad hominem*. The brethren who denounced the Board of Missions as unscriptural, had nothing to say against the boards of the Seminaries. Any one sees, however, that if the one is unlawful, the others must be.

The grand objection urged against this new theory, the one which showed it to be not only inconsistent and impracticable, but intolerable, was, that it is, in plain English, nothing more or less than a device for clothing human opinions with divine authority. The law of God was made to forbid not only what it says, but what may be inferred from it. We grant that what a man infers from the word of God binds his own conscience. But the trouble is, that he insists that it shall bind mine also. We begged to be excused. No man may make himself the lord of my conscience, much less will any man be allowed to make himself lord of the conscience of the church. One man infers one thing, another a different, from the Bible. The same man infers one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow. Must the church bow her neck to all these burdens? She would soon be more trammelled than the church in the wilderness, with this infinite difference, the church of old was measurably restricted by fetters which God himself imposed; the plan now is to bind her with fetters which human logic or caprice forges. This she will never submit to.

Dr. Thornwell told us that the Puritans rebelled against the doctrine that what is not forbidden in Scripture is allowable. It was against the theory of liberty of discretion, he said, our fathers raised their voices and their arms. We always had a different idea of the matter. We supposed that it was in resistance to this very doctrine of inferences they poured out their blood like water. In their time, men inferred from Romans xiii. 1, ("Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation,") the doctrine of passive submission. From the

declaration and command of Christ, "The Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do," they inferred the right of the church to make laws to bind the conscience. On this ground Tories and high-church men sought to impose on the church their trumpery vestments, and their equally frivolous logical deductions. It was fetters forged from inferences our fathers broke, and we, their children, will never suffer them to be rewelded. There is as much difference between this extreme doctrine of divine right, this idea that everything is forbidden which is not commanded, as there is between this free, exultant church of ours, and the mummied forms of mediæval Christianity. We have no fear on this subject. The doctrine need only be clearly propounded to be rejected.

SHORT NOTICES.

Sermons. By Joseph Addison Alexander, D. D. New York: Charles Scribner, Grand street. London: Sampson Low, Son & Co. 1860. Vols. I. II.

The unexpected death of Dr. J. Addison Alexander in the prime of life, and in the full maturity of his extraordinary talents, is a loss to the church and the world which cannot be estimated. It was natural that those best acquainted with his worth, should at once do all they could, by the publication of his literary remains, to compensate for so great a loss. It is to be lamented that these are so few. It was perhaps an incident of his mental superiority, that he could never satisfy himself. His ideal was always above the actual. The consequence was that he left many works unfinished. Many collections of materials in such a state as to be intelligible only to himself. Happily, this was not the case with his sermons. Many, indeed, of his discourses, the recollections of which, those who heard them cherish most fondly, cannot now be found. These volumes, however, are proof that a sufficient number were written out in full, and escaped destruction at his own hands, to give some idea of his power as a preacher. The impression which he made in the pulpit was less due to