

PART I.

THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

I. The scriptural form of Church Government, which is that of Presbytery, is comprehended under these five heads of doctrine, viz: 1. Of the Church; 2. Of its Members; 3. Of its Officers; 4. Of its Courts; and 5. Of its Orders.

II. The Church which the Lord Jesus Christ has erected in this world for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, is His visible kingdom of grace, and is one and the same in all ages.

III. The Members of this visible Church catholic are all those persons in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ, and of submission to His laws.

IV. The Officers of the Church, by whom all its powers are administered, are, according to the Scriptures, are, Presbyters who both rule, and labour in word and doctrine; Presbyters who rule; and Deacons; all which offices are ordained and defined by Christ, the Lawgiver.

V. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is not a several, but a joint power, to be exercised by Presbyters in Courts. These Courts may have jurisdiction over one or many Congregations; but they sustain such mutual relations as to realize the idea of the unity of the Church.

VI. The Ordination of Officers is ordinarily by a Court.

VII. This scriptural doctrine of Presbytery is necessary to the perfection of the order of the visible Church, but is not essential to its existence.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE CHURCH.

Section I.—Of its King and Head.

I. Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government is, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end; who sits upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever; having all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised Him from the dead, and set Him on His own right hand, far above all principalities

and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; He being ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things, received gifts for His Church, and gave all officers necessary for the edification of His Church, and perfecting of His saints.

II. Jesus, the Mediator, is the sole Priest, Prophet, King, Saviour, and Head of the Church, contains in Himself, by way of eminency, all the offices in His Church, and hath many of their names attributed to Him in the Scriptures. He is Apostle, Teacher, Pastor, Minister and Bishop, and the only Lawgiver in Zion. It belongeth to His Majesty from His throne of glory, to command, rule and teach the Church, through His Word and Spirit, by the ministry of men; thus mediately exercising His own authority, and enforcing His own laws, unto the edification and establishment of His kingdom.

III. Christ, as King, hath given to His Church officers, oracles and laws; and especially hath He ordained therein His own system of doctrine, government, discipline, and worship; all which are either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced therefrom; and to which things He commands that nothing be added, nor from them ought be taken away.

IV. Since the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, He is present with the Church by His Word and Spirit, and the benefits of all His offices are effectually applied by the Holy Ghost.

Section II.—The Visible Church Defined.

I. The visible Church, which, before the law, under the law, and now under the gospel, is one and the same, and consists of all those who make profession of the true religion, together with their children; and under the gospel, it is catholic or universal; not, as before under the law, confined to one nation.

II. From partial illumination and weakness of faith in Christians, and from the devices of Satan, deplorable divisions have taken place in the Church since the days of the Apostles; nevertheless, those particular Churches which maintain the word and sacraments in their integrity are to be recognized as churches of Jesus Christ.

III. It is according to scriptural example that the Church should be divided into many organized congregations.

Section III.—Of the Nature and Extent of Church Power.

I. The power which Christ hath committed to His Church vests in the whole body, the rulers and the ruled, constituting it a spiritual commonwealth. This power, as exercised by the people, extends to the choice of those officers whom He hath appointed in His Church.

II. Ecclesiastical power, which is wholly spiritual, is two-fold; the officers exercising it, sometimes severally, as in preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and comforting the afflicted; which is the power of order; and exercising it, sometimes jointly, in Church-courts, after the form of judgment; which is the power of jurisdiction.

III. The sole function of the Church, as a kingdom and government distinct from the civil commonwealth, are to proclaim, to administer, and to enforce the law of Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

IV. The Church, with its organized capacity, with its ordinances, officers, and courts, is the only agency which Christ hath ordained, for its own edification and government, for the propagation of the faith, and for the evangelization of the world.

V. Every exercise of ecclesiastical power, whether joint or several, hath the divine sanction, when in conformity with the statutes of the kingdom enacted by Christ, the Lawgiver, not only because of this conformity, but also because put forth by courts or by officers appointed thereunto in His Word.

Section IV.—Of the Congregation.

I. A Congregation consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the Scriptures, and submitting to the lawful government of Christ's kingdom.

II. The officers of a congregation are, the Pastor, the Ruling Elders, and the Deacons.

III. The jurisdiction of the Congregation is lodged in the hands of the Pastor and Ruling Elders thereof, as a joint power, in the Church Session.

IV. To the Deacons belongs the administration of the offerings for the poor and other pious uses. To them, also, is properly committed the charge of the temporal goods of the Congregation.

V. The ordinances established by Christ, the Head, in the Congregation, are prayer; singing praises; reading, expounding, and preaching the Word of God; administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; public solemn fasting and thanksgiving; catechizing; making offerings for the relief of the poor, and for other pious uses; exercising discipline; and blessing the people.

VI. Congregations, although destitute of the official ministrations of the Word, ought not, therefore, to forsake the assembling of themselves together, but should meet on the Lord's day, and at other suitable times, for public worship, under the direction of the Session. In like manner, Christians whose lot is cast in destitute regions ought to meet for the worship of God.

Section V.—Of the Organization of a Congregation.

I. In the organization of a Congregation, the first step shall be to receive testimonials on behalf of such of the applicants as had previously been members of the Church elsewhere; and, in the next place, to admit to a profession of faith in Christ such candidates as on examination may be found qualified.

II. These persons should then be required to enter into covenant, by answering the following question affirmatively, with the uplifted hand, viz: "Do you, in reliance on God for strength, solemnly promise and covenant that you will walk together as an organized Congregation, on the principles of the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church, and that you will study the purity and harmony of the whole body?" The

presiding minister shall then say: "I now pronounce and declare that you are constituted a Congregation, according to the Word of God and the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church in the United States: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

III. Ruling Elders and Deacons are then to be elected, ordained and installed.

CHAPTER III.

OF CHURCH MEMBERS.

I. The infant seed of the faithful are federally holy, and by birth-right members of the Church. Hence, they are entitled to baptism, which is the seal of the covenant, and the outward badge of membership in the visible Church. It is the duty of Christian parents to present their children for baptism within a reasonable time; nor can they neglect this duty without sin. Notwithstanding such neglect by parents, their children are entitled to the pastoral oversight, instruction, and government of the Church, with a view to their embracing the covenant personally, and on arriving at years of discretion, receiving the seals thereof.

II. All baptized persons are entitled to the watchful care, instruction and government of the Church, even though they are adults, and have made no profession of faith in Christ.

III. But those only, who have made a profession of faith in Christ, are entitled to all the rights and privileges of the Church.

CHAPTER IV.

OF CHURCH OFFICERS.

Section I.—Of their General Classification.

I. Under the New Testament, our blessed Lord at first collected His people out of different nations and formed them into one body, by the mission of extraordinary officers, endued with miraculous gifts, which have long since ceased.

II. As the whole polity of the Church consisteth in doctrine, discipline, and distribution; so, the ordinary and perpetual officers in the Church are, Teaching Elders, who labor in the word and doctrine; Ruling Elders, who wait on government; and Deacons, whose chief function is the distribution of the offerings of the faithful.

III. No one who exercises office in the Church ought to usurp dominion therein, or receive any titles of spiritual preeminence or lordship; but only those titles that are employed in the word.

Section II.—Of the Minister of the Word.

I. Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists, are ascension gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church; and though these titles describe distinct offices or functions, they all belong to the one class of Teaching Elders, usually styled Ministers of the Gospel.

II. Besides possessing that competency of human learning which is needful, he that fills this office should be blameless in life, sound in the faith, and apt to teach; he should exhibit a sobriety of behaviour and holiness of conversation becoming the gospel; he should rule his own house well; and should have a good report of them that are without.

III. This office is the first in the Church, both for dignity and usefulness. The person who fills it hath in Scripture different titles expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed Bishop. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed Pastor. As he serves Christ in His Church, he is termed Minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example of the flock, and to govern well in the house and kingdom of Christ, he is termed Presbyter or Elder. As he is the messenger of God, he is termed Angel of the Church. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed Ambassador. As he bears the glad tidings of salvation to the ignorant and perishing, he is termed Evangelist. As he is commissioned and sent forth by the Church on his errand of love and mercy, he is termed Apostle or Missionary. As he stands in the great Congregation to proclaim the gospel, he is termed Preacher. As he expounds the Word, and by sound doctrine both exhorts and convinces the gainsayer, he is termed Doctor or Teacher. And as he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed Steward of the mysteries of God. These titles do not indicate different grades of office, but all describe one and the same officer.

IV. As the Lord has given different gifts to the Ministers of the Word, and hath committed to them various works to execute, the Church is authorized to call and appoint them to the respective functions of Pastors, Doctor and Evangelist, and to such other works as may be needful to the Church, according to the gifts in which they excel.

V. The Pastor is he whom the Church places over a Congregation. It appertains to his office to pray for and with his flock, as the mouth of the people unto God; to read and expound the Scriptures publicly; to feed the flock by preaching the Word; to direct the congregation in singing the praises of God; to administer the sacraments; to bless the people from God; to catechize the children and youth; to visit officially the people, devoting especial attention to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; and, with the other Elders, to exercise the joint power of rule.

VI The Doctor or Teacher is he whom the Church appoints to teach in schools of divinity, or to give instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion to youth assembled in Colleges and Universities. It always belongs to his office to take a pastoral oversight of the youth committed to his charge, and to be diligent in sowing the seed of the Word, and gathering the fruit thereof, as one who watches for souls.

VII. The Evangelist is he whom the Church appoints to the work of preaching the Word in foreign countries, frontier settlements, and the destitute parts of the Church; and to him may be entrusted extraordinary powers to organize Congregations and ordain Presbyters.

Section III.—Of the Ruling Elders.

I. As there were in the Church, under the law, Elders of the people for the government thereof; so, in the gospel Church, Christ hath furnished others besides the Ministers of the Word, with gifts and commission to govern when called thereunto.

II. These Presbyters, as ecclesiastical rulers, possess the same authority with the Teaching Elder.

III. Those who fill this office ought to be blameless in life and sound in the faith; they should be men of wisdom and discretion; and from the holiness of their walk and conversation, should be examples to the flock.

IV. Ruling Elders, the immediate representatives of the people, are chosen by them, that in conjunction with Pastors or Ministers they may exercise government and discipline, and take the oversight of the spiritual interests of the Congregation, and also of the Church generally, when called thereunto. It appertains to their office, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to their charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. Evils which they cannot correct by private admonition, they should bring to the notice of the Session. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick; they should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, nourish and guard the children of the Church; and all those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of charity, are especially incumbent upon them by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties. They should pray with and for the people; they should be careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached word among the flock; and should inform the pastor of cases of sickness, affliction, and awakening, and all others which may need his especial attention.

Section IV.—Of the Office of Deacon.

I. The office of Deacon is ordinary and perpetual in the Church of Christ.

II. The duties of this office specially relate to the care of the poor, and to the collection and proper distribution of the offerings of the people for pious uses. To the Deacons, also, is properly committed the management of the temporal goods of the Congregation.

III. To this office should be chosen men of honest repute and approved piety, who are esteemed for their prudence and sound judgment, whose conversation becometh the gospel, and whose lives are exemplary; seeing that those duties to which all Christians are called by the law of charity are, by divine vocation, especially incumbent on the Deacon, as an officer in Christ's house.

IV. The Pastor of the Congregation is *ex officio* Moderator of the Board of Deacons. A complete account of all collections and distributions, and a full record of all proceedings should be kept, and submitted to the Session for examination and approval at least once a year.

V. In Congregations where it is impossible to secure the appointment of a sufficient number of Deacons, the Ruling Elders may act as Deacons until the deficiency can be supplied.

VI. Where it shall appear needful, the Church-session may select and appoint godly women for the care of the sick, of prisoners, of poor widows and orphans, and in general for the relief of distress.

CHAPTER V.

OF CHURCH COURTS.

Section I.—Of the Courts in General.

I. It is agreeable to Scripture, and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the Church be governed by various courts, in regular subordination; which are all, nevertheless, Presbyteries, inasmuch as they are lawful bodies of Presbyters.

II. The courts of this Church are, Church-sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly.

III. The Pastor is *ex officio* Moderator of all congregational assemblies. The Moderator of the Presbytery, the Synod, and the General Assembly, shall be chosen at each stated meeting of those courts; and the Moderator, or in case of his absence, the last Moderator present, or, if there be none, then the oldest Minister in attendance, shall open the meeting with a sermon, unless it be highly inconvenient, and shall hold the chair until a new Moderator be chosen.

IV. The Moderator possesses all authority necessary for the preservation of order, and for convening and adjourning the court, according to its own ruling. He may, also, on any extraordinary emergency, convene the court by his circular letter, before the ordinary time of meeting. And in case of the failure of the appointed meeting, he may convene the court at a suitable time and place.

V. It is the duty of the Clerks, whose continuance in office shall be during pleasure, besides recording the transactions, to preserve the records carefully, and to grant extracts from them whenever properly required. Such extracts, under the hand of the Clerk, shall be authentic vouchers in any ecclesiastical court, and to every part of the Church.

VI. The expenses of Ministers and Ruling Elders, in their attendance on the courts, shall be defrayed by the bodies which they respectively represent.

Section II.—Of the Jurisdiction of Church Courts.

I. These assemblies are altogether distinct from the civil magistracy, nor have they any jurisdiction in political or civil affairs. They have no power to inflict temporal pains and penalties; but their authority is in all respects moral or spiritual.

II. The jurisdiction of Church courts, which is only ministerial and declarative, is three-fold, relating, respectively, to the doctrines and precepts of Christ; to the order of the Church; and to the exercise of discipline. *First*, they can make no new laws binding the conscience; but, declaratively, they may frame symbols of faith to be received by all who enter into Church-communion; they may bear testimony against errors in doctrine and immoralities in practice, within or without the pale of the Church; and, ministerially, may decide cases of conscience. *Secondly*, they have power, ministerially, to establish canons for the

government, discipline, worship, and extension of the Church, which must be agreeable to the general doctrines relating thereto contained in the Scriptures; the circumstantial details only of these matters being left to be regulated by the Christian prudence and wisdom of Church officers and courts. *Thirdly*, having the power of the keys, they possess the right of requiring obedience to the laws of Christ. Hence, ministerially, they admit those qualified to sealing ordinances and to their respective offices; and they exclude the disobedient and disorderly from their offices, or from sacramental privileges; but the highest censure to which their authority extends, is to cut off the contumacious and impenitent from the congregation of believers. *Moreover*, they possess all the administrative authority necessary to give effect to these powers.

III. All Church-courts are one in nature, constituted of the same elements, and possessed inherently of the same kind of rights and powers; the highest court being a mere expansion of the lowest. Yet it is according to Scriptural example, and needful to the purity and harmony of the whole Church, that disputed matters of doctrine and order, arising in the lower courts, should be referred to the higher for decision.

IV. For the orderly and efficient dispatch of ecclesiastical business, it is necessary that the sphere of action of each court should be distinctly defined. The Session exercises jurisdiction over a single Congregation: the Presbytery over what is common to the Ministers, Sessions, and Congregations within a prescribed district; the Synod over what belongs in common to three or more Presbyteries, and their Ministers, Sessions and Congregations; and the General Assembly over such matters as concern the whole Church; and the jurisdiction of these courts is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution. Every court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline seriously and reasonably proposed, and, in general, to maintain truth and righteousness, condemning erroneous opinions and practices, which tend to the injury of the peace, purity or progress of the Church; while each court exercises exclusive original jurisdiction over all matters specially belonging to it, the lower courts being subject to the review and control of the higher, in regular gradation. Hence, these Courts are not separate and independent tribunals; but they have a mutual relation, and every act of jurisdiction is the act of the whole Church, performed by it through the appropriate organ.

Section III.—Of the Church-Session.

I. The Church-session consists of the Pastor or Pastors, if there be any, and the Ruling Elders of a Congregation. Two Ruling Elders, if there be so many, with the Pastor, if there be one, shall be necessary to constitute a quorum.

II. In case of the sickness or absence of the Pastor, or when from prudential reasons it may appear advisable that some other Minister should preside, such Minister, belonging to the same Presbytery, as the Pastor, with the concurrence of the Elders, may designate, shall be invited to preside in his place. The same rule shall be observed in the meetings of the Congregation.

III. When a Congregation is without a Pastor, the Moderator of the Session shall be either the Minister appointed for that purpose by the

Presbytery, or one invited by the Session to preside on a particular occasion. But where it is highly inconvenient to procure the attendance of such a Moderator, the Session may proceed without it. In judicial cases, this Moderator shall always be a member of the same Presbytery with the Congregation.

IV. In Congregations where there are two or more Pastors, they shall, when present, alternately preside.

V. The Church-session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the Congregation; for which purpose it has power to inquire into the knowledge, principles and Christian conduct of the Church members under its care; to censure those found delinquent; to see that parents do not neglect to present their children for baptism; to receive members into the Church; to grant letters of dismission to other Congregations, which shall always include the names of any baptized children; to ordain and install additional Ruling Elders and Deacons on their election by the Congregation; to examine and approve, or censure the records of the Board of Deacons; to establish and control Sabbath-schools and Bible classes, with especial reference to the children of the Church; to order collections for pious uses; to take the oversight of the singing in the public worship of God; to assemble the Congregation for worship when there is no Minister; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the Congregation; to observe and carry out the injunctions of the higher courts; and to appoint delegates to the Presbytery and the Synod, who are on their return to make report of their diligence.

VI. The Session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly. Moreover, the Pastor has power to convene the Session, when he may judge it requisite; and he shall always convene it when requested to do so by any two of the Ruling Elders. The Session shall, also, convene when directed so to do by the Presbytery.

VII. Every Session shall keep a fair record of its proceedings, which record shall be, at least once in every year, submitted to the inspection of the Presbytery.

VIII. Every Session should keep a fair register of baptisms, with the dates of the birth of the persons baptized; of those admitted to the Lord's table; of non-communicating members; and of the deaths and removals of Church members.

Section IV.—Of the Presbytery.

I. The Presbytery consists of all the Ministers and one Ruling Elder from each Congregation within a certain district.

II. Ministers who are not engaged in an authorized ministerial calling, under the authority of the Presbytery, unless they are excused from such duties by the Presbytery, on account of age, or other infirmity, are under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery, but at the discretion of the Presbytery may be debarred from ruling the Church, until they enter on some lawful ministerial work.

III. Every Ruling Elder, not known to the Presbytery, shall produce a certificate of his regular appointment from the Session of the Congregation which he represents.

IV. Any three Ministers belonging to the Presbytery, together with at least one Ruling Elder, being met at the time and place appointed, shall be a quorum competent to proceed to business.

V. Ministers seeking admission to a Presbytery are to be examined on experimental religion, and also touching their views in theology and Church government. If applicants come from other denominations, the Presbytery shall also require them to answer in the affirmative the questions put to candidates at their ordination.

VI. The Presbytery shall cause to be transcribed in some convenient part of the book of records, the obligations required of Ministers at their ordination, which shall be subscribed by all admitted to membership in the following form, viz: "I, A. B., do *ex animo* receive and subscribe the above obligations, as a just and true exhibition of my faith and principles, and do resolve and promise to exercise my ministry in conformity thereunto."

VII. The Presbytery has power to receive and issue appeals from Church-sessions and references brought before it in an orderly manner; to examine and license candidates for the holy ministry; to receive, ordain, install, remove, dismiss, and judge Ministers; to review the records of Church-sessions; to redress whatever they may have done contrary to order, and to take effectual care that they observe the Constitution of the Church; to establish the pastoral relation; and to dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties, or where the interests of religion imperatively demand it; to appoint and set apart Doctors and Evangelists to their proper places; to require Ministers to devote themselves diligently to their sacred calling, and to censure the delinquent; to see that the injunctions of the higher courts are obeyed among the Congregations; to condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church; to visit Congregations, for the purpose of inquiring into their state, and redressing the evils that may have arisen in them; to unite or divide Congregations, at the request of the members thereof; to form and receive new Congregations; to take special oversight of vacant Congregations; in general, to order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the Congregations under its care; to appoint commissioners to the General Assembly; and, finally, to propose to the Synod or the Assembly, for its adoption, such measures as may be of common advantage to the Church at large.

VIII. The Presbytery shall keep a full and fair record of its proceedings, and shall send up the same to the Synod annually for inspection and review. It shall, also, report to the Synod and the General Assembly every year the condition and progress of religion within its bounds during the year; and all the important changes which may have taken place, such as the licensures, the ordinations, the receiving or dismissing of members, the removal of members by death, the union and the division of Congregations, and the formation of new ones.

IX. The Presbytery shall meet at least twice a year on its own adjournment; and when any emergency shall require a meeting sooner than the time to which it stands adjourned, the Moderator, or, in case of his absence, death, or inability to act, the Stated Clerk shall, with the concurrence, or at the request of two Ministers and two Ruling Elders of different Congregations, call a special meeting. For this purpose he shall give notice, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, to every Minister belonging to the Presbytery, and to the Session of every vacant Congregation, in due time previous to the meeting; which shall not be less than ten days. And nothing shall

be transacted at such special meeting besides the particular business for which the court has been thus convened.

X. Ministers in good standing in other Presbyteries, or in any Church with which the General Assembly holds correspondence, being present at any meeting of the Presbytery, may be invited to sit and deliberate as corresponding members. It is proper for the Moderator to invite such corresponding ministers to come forward, and to offer to them the right hand of fellowship.

XI. When Evangelists are sent to preach the Gospel, and plant Congregations beyond the boundaries of the organized Church, as soon as three of them can regularly meet together, they should organize as a Presbytery, even in anticipation of the organization of Congregations, and report to the most convenient Synod.

Section V.—Of the Synod.

I. A Synod consists of all the Ministers and one Ruling Elder from each Congregation in a district comprising at least three Presbyteries. The qualifications for membership in the Synod are the same as those for the Presbytery.

II. The Synod shall meet at least once in each year; and any seven Ministers belonging to it, who shall convene at the time and place of meeting, with at least three Ruling Elders, shall be a quorum; provided, not more than three of the said Ministers belong to one Presbytery.

III. The same rule as to corresponding members, which was laid down with respect to the Presbytery, shall apply to the Synod.

IV. The Synod has power to receive and issue all appeals regularly brought up from the Presbyteries; to decide on all references made to it; to review the records of the Presbyteries, and redress whatever may have been done by them contrary to order; to take effectual care that they observe the Constitution of the Church, and that they obey the injunctions of the higher courts; to erect new Presbyteries, and unite or divide those which were before erected; to appoint Doctors and Evangelists to such work, proper to their office, as may not fall under the particular jurisdiction of a Presbytery; generally to take such order with respect to the Presbyteries, Sessions, and Congregations under its care, as may be in conformity with the Word of God, and the established rules, and which tend to promote the edification of the Church; to concert measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement of the Church within its bounds; and, finally, to propose to the General Assembly for its adoption such measures as may be of common advantage to the whole Church.

V. It shall be the duty of the Synod to keep full and fair records of its proceedings, to submit them annually to the inspection of the General Assembly, and to report to the same the number of its Presbyteries and of the members thereof, and in general all important changes which may have occurred within its bounds during the year.

Section VI.—Of the General Assembly.

I. The General Assembly is the highest court of this Church, and represents in one body all the Congregations thereof. It bears the title of THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, and constitutes the bond of union, peace, and correspondence among all its Congregations.

II. The General Assembly shall meet at least annually, and shall consist of commissioners from the Presbyteries in the following proportion, viz: Every Presbytery shall be entitled to send one Minister and one Ruling Elder; but if it consists of more than twenty-four ministerial members, it shall send an additional Minister and Ruling Elder.

III. Each Commissioner, before his name shall be enrolled as a member of the Assembly, shall produce from his Presbytery a commission under the hand of the Moderator and Clerk, in the following or like form, viz:

“The Presbytery of _____ being met at _____ on the _____ day of _____, doth hereby appoint A. B., Bishop of the Congregation of _____ [or Doctor, or Evangelist, or Ruling Elder; of the Congregation of _____ as the case may be;] and in the case of his absence, then C. D., Bishop of the Congregation of _____ [or Doctor, or Evangelist, or Ruling Elder of the Congregation of _____ as the case may be,] to be a commissioner on behalf of this Presbytery, to the next General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to meet at _____, on the _____ day of _____, A.D. _____ or wherever and whenever the said Assembly may happen to sit; to consult, vote, and determine on all things that may come before that body, according to the principles and Constitution of this Church and the Word of God. And of his diligence herein, he is to render an account of his return.

Signed by order of the Presbytery, _____ (A. B.,) *Moderator.*
(C. D.,) *Clerk.*

V. Any eighteen of these commissioners, of whom one-half shall be Ministers, and at least five shall be Ruling Elders, being met on the day, and at the place appointed, shall be a quorum for the transaction of business.

VI. The General Assembly shall have power to receive and issue all appeals, references and complaints regularly brought before it from the inferior courts; to reprove, warn, and bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously affecting the Church; to give its advice and instruction in conformity with the Constitution in all cases submitted to it; to review the records of the Synods; to take care that the inferior courts observe the Constitution; to redress whatever they may have done contrary to order; to take such order in general with respect to them as may be in conformity with the Word of God and the constitutional rules; to concert measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement of the Church; to erect new Synods; to institute the agencies, and superintend the general work of evangelization; to appoint Doctors and Evangelists to such labours as fall under its jurisdiction; to suppress schismatical contentions and disputations according to the canons provided **therefor**; to receive under its jurisdiction other ecclesiastical bodies, whose organization is conformed to the doctrine and order of this Church—in doing which the provisions of the Constitution shall be carefully observed; to authorize Synods and Presbyteries to exercise similar power in receiving bodies suited to become constituents of those courts, and lying within their geographical bounds respectively; to correspond with other Churches;

and in general to recommend and attempt the promotion of charity, truth and holiness through all the Congregations under its care.

VII. The whole business of the Assembly being finished, and the vote taken for dissolving the present Assembly, the Moderator shall say from the chair: "By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Church, let this General Assembly be dissolved, and I do hereby dissolve it, and require another General Assembly chosen in the same manner, to meet at _____ on the _____ day of _____ A. D. _____;" after which, he shall pray and return thanks, and pronounce on those present the apostolic benediction.

Section VII.—Of Ecclesiastical Commissions.

I. Commissions differ from ordinary committees in this, that while the committee is appointed simply to examine, consider, and report, the commission is authorized to deliberate upon and conclude the business submitted to it, subject, however, to the review of the court appointing it. To this end full records of its proceedings shall be submitted to the court appointing it, which, if approved, may be entered on the minutes of that court.

II. Any court above the Session may execute by its commission the taking of testimony in judicial cases, the ordination of Ministers, the installation of Ministers, the visitation of portions of the Church affected with disorder, and the organization of new Congregations. The commission for the ordination of a Minister shall always consist of a quorum of the court, but the Presbytery itself shall conduct the previous examinations.

III. The Synod and the General Assembly may commit any case of trial, coming before them on appeal, to the judgment of a commission. The commission of a Synod shall consist of not less than fifteen, of whom five shall be Ruling Elders; the commission of the Assembly, of not less than twenty-seven, of whom nine shall be Ruling Elders. In each case two-thirds of the commissioners shall be a quorum to attend to business. The commission shall try the cause in the manner prescribed by the rules of discipline; and in rendering judgment shall make a full statement of the case, which shall be submitted to the court for its adoption, as its judgment in the cause.

IV. The General Assembly shall have power to commit the various interests pertaining to the general work of evangelization, to one or more commissions.

CHAPTER VI.

OF CHURCH—ORDERS.

Section I.—Of the Doctrine of Vocation.

I. Vocation to office in the Church is of two sorts, extraordinary and ordinary. It is extraordinary, when it is by God Himself, as was the calling of the Prophets and Apostles, which kind of vocation has ceased. It is ordinary, when besides the calling of God by the Spirit, and the inward testimony of a good conscience, there is the manifest approbation of God's people, and the concurrent judgment of the lawful court of Christ's house, according to His Word.

II. Ordinary outward vocation consists in election and examination.

III. Since all the power, which Christ hath committed to the Church and vested in His people, is exercised by them in the choice of their officers; and since the government of the Church is representative; the right of the election of officers by God's people, either immediately by their own suffrages, or mediately through Church-courts composed of their chosen representatives, is indefeasible. Nor can any man be placed over a Congregation in any office, without the election or at least the consent of that Congregation thereunto.

IV. Upon those whom God calls to bear office in His Church, He bestows suitable gifts for the discharge of their various duties. Wherefore, every candidate for office is to be examined and approved by the court by which he is to be ordained. And it is indispensable that, besides possessing the natural and acquired gifts and abilities which are needful, every one admitted to an office should be sound in the faith, and his life and conversation be according to godliness.

Section II.—Of the Doctrine of Ordination.

I. Officers in the organized Church, having been lawfully called, are to be invested with their respective offices by the ordination of a court.

II. As every ecclesiastical office, according to the Scriptures, is a special charge, no man ought to be ordained, unless it be to the performance of a definite work.

III. Ordination is the solemn authoritative admission of one duly called to an office in the Church of God, with, prayer and the imposition of hands; to which it is proper to add the giving of the right hand of fellowship.

Section III.—Of the Election of Church-Officers.

I. Every Congregation shall elect persons to the offices of Pastor, Ruling Elder, and Deacon, in the following manner, viz: Public notice shall previously be given by the Session, that the Congregation is to convene at the usual place of public worship for such purpose; and it shall always be the duty of the Session to convene them, when a majority of the persons entitled to vote in the case shall, by petition, request that a meeting be called.

II. It is important that, in all these elections, a Minister should preside; but if the Session find it impracticable, without hurtful delay, to procure the attendance of a Minister, the election may nevertheless be held.

III. The Congregation being convened, the Moderator shall put the vote to the electors whether they are ready to proceed to the election. If they declare themselves ready, the Moderator shall call for nominations; after which the election shall immediately proceed, unless the meeting prefer to postpone it to a subsequent day. Or, the election may proceed by ballot without nominations. But in every case a majority of all the voters present shall be required to elect.

IV. All Communicating members of the Church, in good and regular standing, but no others, are entitled to vote in the election of Church-officers in the Congregations to which they are respectively attached. In the election of a Pastor, when a majority of the electors

case their votes for a candidate, he shall be considered elected; but a separate vote may also be taken of the non-communicating adult members of the Church, who are regular in their attendance on the common ordinances in that Congregation, and of all other persons who regularly contribute to the support of the Pastor, in order to be laid before the Presbytery as a representative of their desires in the premises.

V. On the election of a Pastor, if it appear that a large minority of the Congregation are averse from the candidate who has a majority of votes, and cannot be induced to concur in the call, the presiding Minister shall endeavour to dissuade the Congregation from prosecuting it further. But if the Congregation be nearly or entirely unanimous; or if the majority shall insist upon their right to call a Pastor, the presiding Minister, in that case, after using his utmost endeavours to persuade the Congregation to unanimity, shall proceed to draw a call in due form, and to have it subscribed by the electors; certifying at the same time in writing the number and circumstances of those who do not concur in the call; all of which proceedings, along with the result of the vote of the non-communicating members and contributors, shall be laid before the Presbytery, together with the call.

VI. The call shall be in the following, or like form, viz:

The Congregation of _____ being, on sufficient grounds, well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you _____ and having good hopes from our past experience [or knowledge] of your labours, that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call you to undertake the pastoral office in said Congregation; promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of _____, in regular monthly [or quarterly, or half yearly, or yearly] payments, during the time of your being and continuing the regular Pastor of this Church.

In testimony whereof, we have respectively subscribed our names, this _____ day of _____ A. D.

Attested by A. B., Moderator of the Meeting.

VII. But if any Congregation shall choose to subscribe its call by the Ruling Elders and Deacons, or by a committee, it shall be at liberty to do so. But it shall, in such case, be fully certified to the Presbytery by the Minister or other person who presided, that the persons signing have been appointed for that purpose by a public vote of the Congregation; and that the call has been, in all other respects, prepared as above directed.

VIII. Commissioners shall be appointed to lay the call before the Presbytery for its approval, and to prosecute it to its final issue.

IX. If the call be to a Minister or probationer of another Presbytery, the commissioners of the Congregation appointed to prosecute the call must be prepared to produce an attested certificate from their own Presbytery that it had been laid before that body and found in order; and that permission had been granted them to prosecute it before the proper Presbytery.

Section IV.—Of the Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons, and of the Dissolution of their Official Relations.

I. When any person shall have been elected to either of these offices, the Session shall hold free conference with him with reference to his vocation and obligation to accept the office. If the way be clear, and he declare his purpose to accept, the Session shall appoint a day for his ordination.

II. The day having arrived, and the Session being convened in the presence of the Congregation, a sermon shall be preached, after which the moderating Minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of the office of Ruling Elder, or Deacon, together with the character proper to be sustained, and the duties to be fulfilled by the officer elect. Having done this, he shall propose to the candidate, in the presence of the Congregation, the following questions, viz:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

3. Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States?

4. Do you accept the office of Ruling Elder, (or Deacon, as the case may be,) in this Congregation, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?

5. Do you promise to study the peace, unity, edification and purity of the Church?

The Ruling Elder or Deacon elect having answered in the affirmative, the Minister shall address to the members of the Congregation the following question, viz:

Do you, the members of this Congregation, acknowledge and receive this brother as a Ruling Elder, (or Deacon,) and do you promise to yield him all that honour, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles him?

The members of the Congregation having answered this question in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate, with prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Session, to the office of Ruling Elder, (or Deacon, as the case may be.) Prayer being ended, the members of the Session shall take the newly ordained officer by the hand, saying, in words to this purpose, "We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this office with us." The Minister shall then say, "I now pronounce and declare that A. B. has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed a Ruling Elder, (or Deacon,) in this Congregation, agreeably to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States; and that as such he is entitled to all encouragement, honour, and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." After which he shall give to the Ruling Elder, (or Deacon,) and to the Congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

III. The offices of Ruling Elder and Deacon are perpetual; nor can they be laid aside at pleasure; nor can any person be degraded from either office but by disposition after regular trial. Yet a Ruling Elder or

Deacon may, though chargeable with neither heresy nor immorality, become unacceptable, in his official character, to a majority of the Congregation which he serves. In such a case, it is competent for the Session, upon application either from the officer or from the Congregation, to dissolve the relation. But no such application from either party shall be granted, without full opportunity for stating objections being afforded to the other party.

IV. When a Ruling Elder or Deacon removes permanently beyond the proper bounds of the Congregation which he serves, his official relation shall be thereby dissolved, and the Session shall record the fact.

V. When a Ruling Elder or Deacon, who has been released from his official relation, is again elected to his office in the same or another Congregation, he shall be installed after the above form, with the omission of the ceremony of ordination.

Section V.—Of the Ordination of Ministers and the Formation and Dissolution of the Pastoral Relation.

I. No Minister or probationer shall receive a call from a Congregation but by the permission of his Presbytery. When a call has been presented to the Presbytery, if found in order, and the Presbytery deem it for the good of the Church, they shall place it in the hands of the person to whom it is addressed.

II. When a call for the pastoral services of a probationer has been accepted by him, the Presbytery shall take immediate steps for his ordination.

III. Trials for ordination, especially in a different Presbytery from that in which the candidate was licensed, shall consist of a careful examination as to his acquaintance with experimental religion; as to his knowledge of philosophy, theology, ecclesiastical history, the Greek and Hebrew languages, and such other branches of learning as to the Presbytery shall appear requisite; and as to his knowledge of the rules and principles of the government and discipline of the Church. He shall be further required to present the Presbytery a written sermon. The Presbytery being fully satisfied with his qualifications for the sacred office, shall appoint a day for his ordination, which ought if practicable to be in that Congregation of which he is to be the Pastor. It is also recommended that a fast day be observed in the Congregation previous to the day of ordination.

IV. The day appointed for the ordination being come, and the Presbytery convened, a member of the Presbytery, previously appointed to that duty, shall preach a sermon adapted to the occasion. The same, or another member appointed to preside, shall afterwards briefly recite from the pulpit, in the audience of the Congregation, the proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to the ordination; he shall point out the nature and importance of the ordinance, and endeavour to impress the audience with a proper sense of the solemnity of the transaction.

Then addressing himself to the candidate, he shall propose to him the following questions, viz:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

3. Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States?

4. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

5. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the gospel of His Son?

6. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church; whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

7. Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a Minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relative, private or public; and to endeavour by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your conversation, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make you overseer?

8. Are you now willing to take the charge of this Congregation, agreeably to your declaration at accepting their call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties of a Pastor?

V. The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the presiding Minister shall propose to the Congregation the following questions:

1. Do you, the people of this Congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive _____ whom you have called, to be your Pastor?

2. Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline?

3. Do you promise to encourage him in his labours, and to assist his endeavours for your instruction and spiritual edification?

4. And do you engage to continue to him while he is your Pastor, that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to furnish him with whatever you may see needful for the honour of religion and for his comfort among you?

VI. The people having answered these questions in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall kneel down in the most convenient place. Then the presiding Minister shall, with prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, according to the apostolic example, solemnly set him apart to the holy office of the gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall arise from his knees; and the Minister who presides shall first, and afterward all the members of the Presbytery in their order, take him by the right hand, saying, in words to this purpose, "We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this ministry with us." The Moderator shall then say, "I now pronounce and declare that A. B. has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed Pastor of this Congregation, agreeably to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States; and that as such he is entitled to all support, encouragement, honour and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." After which the Minister presiding, or some other appointed for the purpose, shall give a solemn charge in the name of God to the Pastor and to the Congregation, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties; and then by prayer recommend them both to the grace of God and His

holy keeping; and finally, after singing a psalm, shall dismiss the Congregation with the usual blessing. And the Presbytery shall duly record the transaction.

VII. It is highly becoming that, after the solemnity of the instalment, the heads of families of the Congregation then present, or at least the Ruling Elders and Deacons, should come forward to their Pastor and give him their right hand, in token of cordial reception and affectionate regard.

VIII. When it becomes necessary to ordain probationers to the work of the Gospel ministry, as Evangelists or Doctors, the last of the preceding questions shall be omitted, and the following substituted for it, viz: Do you now accept the office and undertake the work of an Evangelist, (or of a Doctor of the Holy Scriptures), and do you promise, in reliance on God for strength, to be faithful in the discharge of all the duties which may be incumbent on you, as a Minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?

IX. No Presbytery shall ordain any Probationer to the work of the Gospel Ministry, with reference to his labouring within the bounds of another Presbytery, but shall furnish him with the necessary testimonials, and require him to repair to the Presbytery within whose bounds he expects to labour, that he may submit himself to its authority, according to the constitution of the Church.

X. When an ordained Minister has accepted a call to the pastoral charge of a Congregation, he shall be installed by the Presbytery, or by its commission appointed for the purpose, according to the above directions, except that everything relating to ordination is to be omitted, and the following questions are to be substituted for those addressed to the candidate, viz:

1. Are you now willing to take charge of this Congregation as their Pastor, agreeably to your declaration at accepting its call?

2. Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of the Church?

3. Do you solemnly promise that by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavour faithfully to discharge all the duties of a Pastor to this Congregation, and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming a Minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeably to your ordination engagements?

XI. When any Minister is about to enter upon the office of Doctor or Evangelist, he shall be installed in a manner similar to that prescribed for the installation of the Pastor, under the order of the court having jurisdiction of his work.

XII. A Congregation desiring to call a settled Pastor from his present charge, shall, by its commissioners, represent to the Presbytery the ground on which it pleads his removal. The Presbytery having heard all the parties, may, upon the view of the whole case, either recommend them to desist from prosecuting the call; or may order it to be delivered to the Minister to whom it is addressed, with or without advice; or may decline to place the call in his hands, as it shall appear most for the peace and edification of the Church at large; or it may refer the whole affair to the next Synod for advice and direction; but no Pastor shall be translated without his own consent. If the parties are not ready to have the matter issued at the meeting then in progress, a

written citation shall be given the Minister and his Congregation to appear before the Presbytery at its next meeting, which citation shall be read from the pulpit on the Sabbath, after sermon, at least two Sabbaths before the intended meeting.

XIII. If the Congregation, or other field of labour, to which a Minister or probationer is called, be under the jurisdiction of a different Presbytery, on his acceptance of the call he shall be furnished with the proper testimonials, and required to repair immediately to that Presbytery, in order that he may be regularly inducted into his office, according to the preceding directions.

XIV. When any Minister shall tender the resignation of his pastoral charge to his Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the Congregation, as in the preceding directions, to appear by its commissioners at the next meeting, to show cause, if any it has, why the Presbytery should not accept the resignation. If the Congregation fail to appear, or if its reasons for retaining its Pastor be deemed insufficient, his resignation shall be accepted, and the pastoral relation dissolved. If any Congregation desires to be relieved of their Pastor, a similar process shall be observed. But whether the Minister or the Congregation initiate proceedings for a dissolution of the relation, there shall always be a meeting of the Congregation, called and conducted precisely in the same manner as when the call of a Pastor is to be made out.

Section VI.—Of the Licensure of Probationers for the Gospel Ministry.

I. Presbyteries shall license probationers to preach the Gospel, in order that after sufficiently trying their talents, and receiving from the Church a good report, they may, in due time, ordain them to the sacred office.

II. The trial of every candidate for licensure shall be had by that Presbytery having jurisdiction of the Congregation of which he is a member. But if the candidate has removed from that Congregation to one within the bounds of a different Presbytery, he shall not be taken under the care of this Presbytery within one year after his reception by the latter Congregation, except in extraordinary cases, of which the Presbytery shall be the judge, and the reasons for which shall be put on record.

III. Candidates applying to the Presbytery to be licensed to preach the Gospel, shall produce satisfactory testimonials of their good moral character, and of their being communicating members of the Church in regular standing. And the Presbytery shall examine them respecting their experimental acquaintance with religion, and the motives which influence them to desire the sacred office. This examination shall be close and particular, and shall ordinarily be conducted in the presence of the Presbytery only. And it is recommended that the candidate be also required to produce a diploma of Bachelor or Master of arts from some College or University; or, at least, authentic testimonials of his having gone through a regular course of learning.

IV. The Presbytery shall try each candidate as to his knowledge of the Latin language and the original languages of the Holy Scriptures. It shall also examine him on philosophy, including logic; on ethics; on the natural and exact sciences; on theology, natural and revealed; and on ecclesiastical history, the sacraments, and Church-government. Moreover, the Presbytery shall require of him,

1. A discussion in Latin of a *thesis* on some common head in divinity.

2. A *critical exercise*; in which the candidate shall give a specimen of his taste and judgment in sacred criticism; presenting an explication of the original text, stating its connexion, illustrating its force and beauties, removing its difficulties, and solving any important questions which it may present.

3. A *popular lecture* in exposition of several verses of Scripture.

4. A *doctrinal sermon*.

V. These, or other similar exercises, at the discretion of the Presbytery, shall be exhibited until it shall have obtained satisfaction as to the candidate's piety, learning and aptness to teach in the Church. The popular lecture and doctrinal sermon, if the **Presbyter** think proper, shall be delivered in the presence of a congregation.

VI. No candidate, except in extraordinary cases, shall be licensed, unless he shall have completed the usual course of academical studies, and shall also have studied divinity at least two years, under some approved teacher of theology, that whenever any Presbytery shall see reason to depart from this rule, it shall always make a record of the fact upon its minutes, with the reasons **therefor**.

VII. If the Presbytery be satisfied with his trial, it shall then proceed to license him in the following manner: The Moderator shall propose to him the following questions, viz:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

3. Do you promise to study the peace, unity, and purity of the Church?

4. Do you promise to submit yourself in the Lord, to the government of this Presbytery, or of any other into the bounds of which you may be called?

VIII. The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, and the Moderator having offered up a prayer suitable to the occasion, he shall address the candidate to the following purpose: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by that authority which He hath given to the Church for its edification, we do license you to preach the gospel as a probationer for the holy ministry, wherever God in His providence may call you; and for this purpose, may the blessing of God rest upon you, and the Spirit of Christ fill your heart. Amen." And record shall be made of the license in the following or like form, viz:

At _____, the _____ day of _____, the Presbytery of _____ having received testimonials in favour of _____; of his having gone through a regular course of literature; of his good moral character: and of his being in the communion of the Church; proceeded to take the usual parts of trial for his licensure. And he having given satisfaction as to his accomplishments in literature; as to his experimental acquaintance with religion; and as to his proficiency in divinity and other studies; the Presbytery did, and hereby does, express its approbation of all these parts of trial. And he having adopted the Confession of Faith of this Church, and satisfactorily answered the questions appointed to be put to candidates to be licensed;

the Presbytery did, and hereby does, license him, the said _____, to preach the gospel of Christ, as a probationer for the holy ministry, within the bounds of this Presbytery, or wherever else he shall be orderly called.

IX. When any candidate for licensure shall have occasion, while his trials are going on, to remove from the bounds of his own Presbytery into those of another, it shall be considered as regular for the latter Presbytery, on his producing proper testimonials from the former, to take up his trials at the point at which they were left, and conduct them to a conclusion, in the same manner as if they had been commenced by itself.

X. In like manner, when any probationer, after licensure, shall, by the permission of his Presbytery, remove without its limits, an extract of the record of his licensure, and a Presbyterial recommendation signed by the Clerk, shall be his testimonials to the Presbytery under whose care he shall come.

XI. Presbyteries should require probationers to devote themselves diligently to the trial of their gifts; and in ordinary cases no one should be ordained to the work of the Gospel-ministry in any office until he has given evidence of his ability to edify the Church by spending at least one year in itinerant missionary, or other suitable labours.

XII. When a probationer shall have been preaching for a considerable time, and his services do not appear to be edifying to the Church, the Presbytery may, if it thinks proper, recall his license; and it shall be its duty to do so, whenever the Probationer shall devote himself to such pursuits as interfere with a full trial of his gifts, according to his license.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THIS CHURCH.

I. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States consists of its Doctrinal Symbols, embraced in the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, together with the Book of Church Order, which comprises the Form of Government, the Canons of Discipline, and the Directory of Worship.

II. The Book of Church Order may be amended on the recommendation of one General Assembly, when a majority of the Presbyteries advise and consent thereunto, and a succeeding General Assembly shall ordain the same.

PART II.**THE CANONS OF DISCIPLINE.****CHAPTER I.**

OF DISCIPLINE, ITS NATURE, OBJECT, AND THE PERSONS SUBJECT TO IT.

I. Discipline is the exercise of that authority, and the application of that system of laws, which the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed in His Church. The term has two senses, the one wider and more general, referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship and control, which the Church exercises over its members, its officers, or its courts; the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying judicial prosecution.

II. Using the term in its wide sense, all baptized persons being members of the Church, are subject to its discipline, and entitled to the benefits thereof; but, in its narrow sense, it refers only to those who have made a profession of their faith in Christ. In this sense, the ends of it are the rebuke of offences, the removal of scandal, the vindication of the honour of Christ, the promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves.

III. An offence, the proper object of judicial process, is anything in the principles or practice of a Church member professing faith in Christ, which is contrary to the Word of God. The Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, together with the principles of Church-order contained in the formularies of government, discipline and worship, are accepted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States, as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation both to faith and practice. Nothing, therefore, ought to be considered by any court as an offence, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture as interpreted in these standards.

IV. The power which Christ hath given to the rulers of His Church is for edification and not for destruction, as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath. As in the preaching of the Word, the wicked are doctrinally separated from the good, so by discipline the Church authoritatively separates between the holy and the profane. In this it acts the part of a tender mother, correcting her children only for their good, that every one of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE DISCIPLINE OF NON-COMMUNICATING MEMBERS.

I. The oversight of the children of the Church, in the first instance, is committed by God to believing parents, who are responsible to the Church for the faithful discharge of this duty. The responsibility of parents continues during the minority of their children, and so long thereafter as they remain inmates of the family; and extends to all such conduct contrary to the purity and sobriety of the Gospel, as parents may and ought to restrain and control.

II. The Church should make special provision for the instruction of its youth in the doctrines of the Bible as set forth in the Catechisms. Hence, Church-sessions ought to establish, under their own authority, Bible-classes and Sabbath-schools for this object, or, where this is impracticable, to adopt such methods as shall secure the same end.

III. When the children of the Church arrive at years of discretion, they are bound to discharge all the duties of Church-members. If they exhibit knowledge to discern the Lord's body, together with a correct walk and conversation, they are to be informed that it is their privilege and duty to make a profession of faith in Christ, (receiving baptism if not baptized), and to come to His table. If they exhibit a wayward disposition, and associate themselves with the profane, the Church must still cherish them in faith, and look after them as a parent yearning over straying children, and ought to use all suitable means, such as the Word of God warrants, and the Christian prudence of Church officers shall dictate for reclaiming them, and bringing them to appreciate their covenant-privileges, and to discharge their covenant obligations.

IV. Those adult non-communicating members, who submit with meekness and gratitude to the government and instruction of the Church, are entitled to special attention. It is the duty of the Minister upon every occasion of the administration of the Lord's Supper, or at least once every year, to preach a sermon to them, and in connexion with the Session to appoint a special meeting with them for prayer, exhortation and conference; on which occasions their rights under the covenant shall be fully explained to them, their duties shall be enforced on their consciences, and they shall be warned of the sin and danger of neglecting them, and urged by the mercies of Christ to come up to the full discharge of their covenant obligations.

V. It is the right of all such members to demand and to enjoy the protection of the Church. They have the common right to arraign before the Session any communicating member for personal offences, and when slandered, they have a right to ask, and it may be the duty of the Session to grant an investigation, in order to their exculpation.

VI. All non-communicating members shall be deemed under the government of the Congregation to which their parents belong, if they live under the parental roof and are minors; or otherwise, under that of the congregation where they reside, or with which they ordinarily worship.

CHAPTER III.

OF OFFENCES.

I. Offences are either personal or general, private or public, but all being sins against God are grounds of discipline as such.

II. Personal offences are violations of the divine law considered in the special relation of wrongs or injuries to particular individuals.

General offences are heresies or immoralities, having no such relation, or considered apart from it.

III. Private offences are those which are known only to a few persons. Public offences are those which are notorious.

CHAPTER IV.

OF CHURCH-CENSURES.

I. The censures which may be inflicted by Church courts are admonition, suspension, excommunication, and deposition. When a lower censure fails to reclaim the delinquent, it may become the duty of the court to proceed to the infliction of a higher censure—but the censures of excommunication and deposition shall not be inflicted by a Church session without the advice of the Presbytery.

II. Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by a Church court, warning him of his guilt and danger, and exhorting him to be more circumspect and watchful in the future.

III. Suspension, with respect to Church members, is the temporary exclusion from sealing ordinances; with respect to Church officers, it is the temporary exclusion from the exercise of their office. It may be either definite or indefinite, as to its duration. Definite suspension is administered as an exemplary censure, when the credit of religion, the honour of Christ, and the good of the delinquent demand it, even though he may have given satisfaction to the court. Indefinite suspension is the exclusion of an offender from sealing ordinances or from his office until he exhibit signs of repentance, or until by his conduct the necessity of the higher censure is made manifest. A Minister may be suspended from his teaching functions, or from his ruling functions, or from both.

IV. Excommunication is the excision of an offender from the communion of the Church. This dreadful censure is only to be inflicted on account of such gross and flagitious crimes or heresies as are accompanied with peculiar aggravations, when incorrigible offenders treat the authority of the courts of Christ's Church with contempt. The design of this censure is to operate on the offender as a means of reclaiming him, to deliver the Church from the scandal of his offence, and to inspire all with fear by the example of his discipline.

V. Deposition is the degradation of an officer from his office, and may or may not be accompanied with the infliction of other censure.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE PARTIES IN CASES OF PROCESS.

I. Original jurisdiction in relation to Ministers of the Gospel pertains exclusively to the Presbytery, and in relation to other Church members to the Session.

II. In the case of personal offences, the injured party can never be a prosecutor without having previously tried the means of reconciliation, and of reclaiming the offender, required by Christ. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Matt. xviii: 15,16. A Church court, however, may judicially investigate personal offences as if general, where the interests of religion seem to demand it. So also in the case of private offences, those to whom they are known cannot become prosecutors without having previously endeavoured to remove the scandal by private means.

III. General offences may be brought before a court, either by an individual or individuals, appearing as prosecutor or prosecutors, and undertaking to substantiate the charge, or by a prosecutor appointed by the court.

IV. In cases of prosecution instituted by the court, the previous steps required by our Lord, in the case of personal offences, are not necessary. There are many cases, however, in which it will better promote the interests of religion to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the offender, and endeavour to bring him to a sense of his guilt, than to institute actual process.

V. It is the duty of all Church sessions and Presbyteries to exercise a proper care over those subject to their authority; and they shall, with due diligence and great discretion, demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting their Christian character. This duty is the more imperative, when those who deem themselves aggrieved by injurious reports shall ask an investigation. If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall promptly appoint a prosecutor to conduct the case. This prosecutor shall be a member of the court, except that, in a case before the session, he may be any communicating member of the same congregation with the accused.

VI. The original and only parties in a case of process are the accuser and the accused. This accuser is always the Presbyterian Church in the United States, whose honor and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor, whether voluntary or appointed, is always the representative of the Church, and as such has all its rights in the case. In appellate courts the parties are known as appellant and appellee.

VII. Every indictment shall begin: "In the name of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," and shall conclude, "against the peace, unity and purity of the Church, and the honour and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof." In every case the Church is the injured and accusing party, *versus* the accused.

VIII. Great caution ought to be exercised in receiving accusations from any person who is known to indulge a malignant spirit towards the accused; who is not of good character; who is himself under censure or process; who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused; or who is known to be litigious, rash, or highly imprudent.

IX. Every voluntary prosecutor shall be previously warned, that if he fail to show probable cause of the charges, he must himself be censured as a slanderer of the brethren, in proportion to the malignity or rashness that shall appear in the prosecution.

X. When a member of a Church-court is under process, all his functions as a member of the court may be suspended, at its discretion, but this shall never be done in the way of censure.

XI. In the discussion of all questions arising in his own cause, the accused shall only exercise the rights of defendant, not of judge.

CHAPTER VI.

OF GENERAL PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL CASES OF PROCESS.

I. It is incumbent on every member of a court of Jesus Christ, engaged in the prosecution of offenders, constantly and prayerfully to bear in mind the inspired injunction, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

II. Process against an offender shall not be commenced unless some person or persons undertake to make out the charge; or unless the court finds it necessary for the honour of religion, itself to investigate the charge.

III. When a charge is laid before the Session or Presbytery, it shall be reduced to writing, and nothing further is to be done at the first meeting of the court, unless by consent of parties, than to give to the accused a full copy of the charges, with the names of the witnesses then known to support them, and to cite all parties and their witnesses to appear and be heard at another meeting, which shall not be sooner than ten days after such citation; at which meeting of the court, the charges shall be read to the accused, if present, and he shall be called upon to say whether he be guilty or not. If he confess, the court may deal with him according to its discretion; if he plead and take issue, the trial shall proceed. Accused parties may plead in writing, when they cannot be personally present.

IV. The citation shall be issued and signed by the Moderator or Clerk, by order and in the name of the court; he shall also issue citations to such witnesses as the accused shall nominate to appear on his behalf.

V. In exhibiting charges, the times, places and circumstances should, if possible, be particularly stated, that the accused may have an opportunity to prove an *alibi*, or to extenuate or alleviate his offence.

VI. When an accused person refuses to obey a citation, he shall be cited a second time; and this second citation shall be accompanied with a notice that if he do not appear at the time appointed, (unless providentially hindered, which hindrance he must notify to the court,) or that if he appear and refuse to plead, he shall be dealt with for his contumacy, as hereinafter provided.

VII. The time which must elapse between the first citation of an accused person and the meeting of the court at which he is to appear, is at least ten days. But the time allotted for his appearance on the subsequent citation is left to the discretion of the court, provided always, however, that it be not less than is quite sufficient for a seasonable and convenient compliance with the citation.

VIII. In case a party accused shall absent or secrete himself, so that process cannot be served on him, the court shall enter upon its record that fact, together with the nature of the offence charged, and shall suspend the accused from sealing ordinances, until he shall appear before the court, and answer to the charges against him. The sentence shall also be made public.

IX. When the offence, with which an accused person stands charged took place at a distance, and it is inconvenient for the witnesses to appear before the court having jurisdiction, that court may either appoint a commission of its own body, or request the coordinate court contiguous to the place where the facts occurred, to take the testimony for it. The accused shall always have notice of the time and place of the meeting of this commission.

X. When an offence, alleged to have been committed at a distance, is not likely otherwise to become known to the court having jurisdiction, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the facts occurred, after satisfying itself that there is **probably** ground of accusation, to send notice to the court having jurisdiction, which is at once to proceed against the accused.

XI. Courts, before proceeding to trial, ought to ascertain that their citations have been duly served on the persons of those cited, or delivered at their dwellings, especially before they proceed to ultimate measures for contumacy.

XII. In all process, it is expedient that there be a committee appointed, (provided the court be sufficiently numerous to admit of it without inconvenience,) who shall be called "the Judicial Committee," and whose duty it shall be to digest and arrange all the papers, and to prescribe under the direction of the court the whole order of the proceedings. The members of this committee shall be entitled, notwithstanding their performance of this duty, to sit and vote in the case as members of the court.

XIII. When the trial is about to begin, it shall be the duty of the Moderator solemnly to announce from the chair that the court is about to pass to the consideration of the cause assigned for judgment, and to enjoin on the members to recollect and regard their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ, and the solemn duty in which they are about to act.

XIV. In order that the trial may be fair and impartial, the witnesses shall be examined in the presence of the accused, or at least after he shall have received due citation to attend. Witnesses may be cross-examined by both parties, and any questions asked which are pertinent to the issue tried.

XV. In all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the parties alone; and when they have been heard, they shall withdraw from the court, until the members deliberate upon and decide the point.

XVI. Whenever a court of first resort proceeds to the trial of a cause, the following order shall be observed: 1. The Moderator shall charge the court; 2. The indictment shall be read, and the answer of the accused heard; 3. The witnesses for the prosecutor, and then those for the accused shall be examined; 4. The parties shall be heard, first the prosecutor and then the accused; 5. The members of the court shall have an opportunity of expressing their views of the case; 6. The decision shall be made and entered on record.

XVII. Pending the trial of a cause, any judge who shall express his opinion of its merits to either party, or to any person not a member of the court; or who shall absent himself from any sitting without the permission of the court, or satisfactory reason rendered, shall be thereby disqualified from taking part in the subsequent proceedings.

XVIII. The parties shall be allowed copies of the whole proceedings, at their own expense, if they demand them. Minutes of the trial shall be kept by the clerk, which shall exhibit the charges, the answer, all the testimony, and all such acts, orders and decisions of the court relating to the cause as either party may desire, and also the judgment. The clerk shall, without delay, attach together the charges, the answer, the citations and returns thereto, and the minutes herein required to be kept. These papers, when so attached, shall constitute "the record" of the cause. In case of a removal of the cause by appeal or complaint, the lower court shall transmit the record thus prepared to the higher court, with the addition of the notice of appeal or complaint, and the reasons thereof, if any, shall have been filed. Nothing which is not contained in this record shall be taken into consideration in the higher court. On the final decision of a cause in the higher court, its judgment shall be sent down to the court in which the cause originated.

XIX. No professional counsel shall be permitted as such to appear and plead in cases of process in any court; but an accused person may, if he desires it, be represented before the session by any communicating member of the same Congregation; or before any other court, by any member of the court. A member of the court so employed, shall not be allowed, after pleading the cause of the accused, to sit in judgment upon the case.

XX. Process, in case of scandal, shall commence within the space of one year after the crime was committed, unless it have recently become flagrant. It may happen, however, that a Church-member may commit an offence after removing to a place far distant from his former residence, and where his connexion with the Church is unknown, in consequence of which circumstances, process cannot be instituted within the time above specified. In all such cases, the recent discovery of the Church membership of the individual shall be considered as equivalent to the crime itself having recently become flagrant. The same principle also shall apply to Ministers, if similar circumstances should occur.

CHAPTER VII.

SPECIAL RULES PERTAINING TO PROCESS BEFORE SESSIONS.

I. Process against all Church members, other than Ministers of the gospel, shall be entered before the Session of the Congregation to which such members belong.

II. When an accused person, having been twice duly cited, shall refuse to appear before the Session, or appearing, shall refuse to plead, the court shall enter upon its records that fact, together with the nature of the offence charged, and he shall be suspended from sealing ordinances for his contumacy. This sentence is to be made public, and shall in no case be removed until he has not only repented of his contumacy, but given satisfaction in relation to the charges against him.

III. In cases in which it may be impracticable immediately to commence process against an accused Church-member, the Session may, if it think the edification of the Church requires it, prevent the accused from approaching the Lord's table, until the charges against him can be examined.

IV. The Session may pursue with a Ruling Elder or Deacon, in similar cases, the course prescribed to the Presbytery, relative to Ministers in chapter viii, paragraph x, of these canons.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPECIAL RULES PERTAINING TO PROCESS AGAINST A MINISTER.

I. As, on the one hand, no minister ought, on account of his office, to be screened in his sin, nor his offences to be slightly censured, so neither ought scandalous charges to be received against him on slight grounds.

II. If any one knows a Minister to be guilty of a private censurable fault, he should warn him in private. But if the guilty person persist in his fault, or it become public, he who knows it should apply to some other Minister of the Presbytery for his advice in the case.

III. Process against a Gospel Minister shall be entered before the Presbytery of which he is a member.

IV. If a Minister accused of an offence, being twice duly cited, shall refuse to appear before the Presbytery, he shall be immediately suspended. And if, after another citation, he still refuse to attend, he shall be deposed as contumacious, and suspended or excommunicated from the Church. Record shall be made of the judgment and of the charges under which he was arraigned, and the sentence be made public.

V. Heresy and schism may be of such a nature as to infer deposition; but errors ought to be carefully considered, whether they strike at the vitals of religion, and are industriously spread, or whether they arise from the weakness of the human understanding, and are not likely to do much injury.

VI. If the Presbytery find on trial that the matter complained of amounts to no more than such acts of infirmity as may be amended, and thus the religious public be satisfied, so that little or nothing remains to hinder the Minister's usefulness, it shall take all prudent measures to remove the scandal.

VII. When the Presbytery is about to proceed to the trial of a Minister, and he arises and makes confession, if the matter is base and flagitious, such as drunkenness, uncleanness, or crimes of a higher nature, however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the court shall, without delay, suspend him from the exercise of his office, or depose him from the ministry.

VIII. A Minister suspended or deposed for scandalous conduct, shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for his sin, until he shall have exhibited for a considerable time such an eminently exemplary, humble and edifying walk and conversation as shall heal the wound made by his scandal. And a deposed Minister shall in no case be restored until it shall appear that the sentiments of the religious public are strongly in his favour, and demand his restoration, and then only by the court inflicting the censure, or with its consent.

IX. As soon as a Minister is deposed, his Congregation shall be declared vacant; but when he is suspended, it shall be left to the discretion of the Presbytery whether that act shall carry with it the dissolution of the pastoral relation.

X. Whenever a Presbytery has strong grounds for believing that a Minister has been inducted into office without divine vocation, even though he may think himself called, it shall be its duty to divest him of his office without censure, and restore him to the position of a private member. In such a case, a notice signed by the Clerk, under the order of the Presbytery, shall be delivered to the individual concerned, that at a given time, which shall be at least ten days subsequent, the question of his being so dealt with is to be considered. This notice shall state distinctly the grounds of this proceeding. The party thus notified shall be heard in his own defence, and if the decision pass against him, he may appeal as if he had been tried with all the usual forms. But this process shall never be used with any Minister who is regularly engaged in his covenanted work.

CHAPTER IX.

OF TESTIMONY.

I. All persons of proper age and intelligence are competent witnesses, except such as do not believe in the existence of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments. The parties may be allowed, but shall not be compelled, to testify. Either party has the right to challenge a witness whom he believes to be incompetent, and the court shall examine and decide upon his competency. It belongs to the court to judge of the degree of credibility to be attached to all evidence.

II. Neither husband or wife shall be compelled to bear testimony, the one against the other, in any court.

III. The testimony of more than one witness is necessary, in order to establish any charge; yet if circumstantial evidence conclusive of the same general charge be produced, or if several credible witnesses bear testimony to different similar acts, the offence shall be considered to be proved.

IV. No witness afterwards to be examined, except a member of the court, shall be present during the examination of another witness on the same case, unless by consent of parties.

V. To prevent confusion, witnesses shall be examined, first by the party introducing them; then cross-examined by the opposite party; after which any member of the court, or either party, may put additional interrogatories. But no question shall be put or answered, except by permission of the Moderator, subject to an appeal to the court; and the court shall not permit questions frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue.

VI. The oath or affirmation to a witness shall be administered by the Moderator in the following or like terms: "You solemnly promise, in the presence of the omniscient and heart-searching God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge, in the matter in which you are called to witness, as you shall answer it to the great Judge of

quick and dead." If, however, at any time a witness should present himself before a court, who, for conscientious reasons, prefers to swear or affirm in any other manner, he shall be allowed to do so.

VII. Every question put to a witness shall, if required, be reduced to writing. When answered, it shall, together with the answer, be recorded, if deemed by either party of sufficient importance.

VIII. The records of a court, or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, if regularly authenticated by the Moderator and Clerk, or either of them, shall be deemed good and sufficient evidence in every other court.

IX. In like manner, testimony taken by one court and regularly certified, shall be received by every other court as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.

X. Cases may arise in which it is not convenient for a court to have the whole or perhaps any part of the testimony in a particular cause taken in its presence. In this case commissioners shall be appointed to take the testimony in question, which shall be considered as if taken in the presence of the court; of which commission, and of the time and place of its meeting, due notice shall be given to the opposite party, that he may have an opportunity of attending. And if the accused shall desire on his part to take testimony at a distance, for his own exculpation, he shall give notice to the court of the time and place when it is proposed to take it, that a commission, as in the former case, may be appointed for the purpose.

XI. A member of the court shall not be disqualified from sitting as a judge by having given testimony in the case.

XII. A member of the Church refusing to testify may be censured for contumacy.

XIII. The testimony given by witnesses shall be faithfully recorded and read to them, for their approbation or subscription.

XIV. If, after a trial before any court, new testimony be discovered, which is supposed to be highly important to the exculpation of the accused, it is proper for him to ask, and for the court to grant, a new trial.

XV. If in the prosecution of an appeal, new testimony is offered, which, in the judgment of an appellate court, has an important bearing on the case, it shall be competent for the court to refer the cause to the inferior court for a new trial; or, with the consent of parties, to take the testimony and issue the case.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE INFLICTION OF CHURCH CENSURES.

I. Ecclesiastical censures ought to be suited to the nature of the offence: for private offences censures in the presence of the court alone, or privately, by one or more members on its behalf; but for public offences, censures in open Session, or the public intimation of the censure. In cases where there are peculiar and special reasons, the courts may visit public offences, not very gross in their character, with private admonition, or with definite suspension in private; but the censure of indefinite suspension shall always be intimated to the

congregation, whilst those of excommunication and deposition shall be either administered before the congregation, or else intimated to the same, at the discretion of the court.

II. When any member or officer of the Church, shall be guilty of a fault deserving censure, the court shall proceed with all tenderness, and shall deal with its offending brother in the spirit of meekness, the members considering themselves, lest they also be tempted.

III. The censure of admonition ought to be administered in private by one or more members in behalf of the court when the offence is not aggravated, and is known only to a few. When the scandal is public, the admonition shall be administered by the Moderator in the presence of the court, and ordinarily shall also be intimated in public.

IV. Definite suspension being an exemplary censure, ought ordinarily to be either administered in open Session, or intimated to the Congregation.

V. The censure of indefinite suspension ought to be inflicted with great solemnity, that it may be the means of impressing the mind of the delinquent with a proper sense of his danger while he stands excluded from the sacraments of the Church of the living God, and that with the divine blessing it may lead him to repentance. When the court has resolved to pass this sentence, the Moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

“Whereas, you, A. B., (here describe the person as a Minister, Ruling Elder, Deacon, or private member of the Church,) are convicted by sufficient proof, [or are guilty by your own confession,] of the sin of—, (here insert the offence,)—we, the Presbytery, [or Church-session,] of C. D., in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the sacraments of the Church, [and from the exercise of your office, or any of the functions thereof,] until you give satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of your repentance.

To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer to Almighty God that He would follow this act of discipline with His blessing.

VI. When the sentence of excommunication has been regularly passed, the Moderator of the Session shall make a public statement before the Congregation of the several steps which have been taken with respect to their offending brother, and inform them that it has been found necessary to cut him off from the communion of the Church. He shall then show the authority of the Church to cast out unworthy members, from Matt. xviii: 15-18, and 1 Cor. v: 1-5, and shall explain the nature, use, and consequence of this censure, warning the people that they are to conduct themselves in all their intercourse with him, as is proper towards one who is under the heaviest censure of the Church. He shall then pronounce sentence to the following effect:

“Whereas, A. B., a member of this Congregation, hath been, by sufficient proof, convicted of the sin of———, and, after much admonition and prayer, obstinately refuseth to hear the Church, and hath manifested no evidence of repentance: Therefore, in the dreadful name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Session of the Congregation of C. D., do pronounce him to be excluded from the sacraments, and cut off from the fellowship of the Church.”

After which, prayer shall be made that the blessing of God may follow his ordinance, for the conviction and reformation of the excommunicated, and for the establishment of all true believers.

VII. The sentence of deposition shall be pronounced by the Moderator in words of the following import:

“Whereas, A. B., a Minister of this Presbytery, [or, a Ruling Elder or Deacon of this Congregation,] has been proved by sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of _____, we, the Presbytery, [or Church-session,] of C. D., do adjudge him totally disqualified for the office of the Christian Ministry, [or Eldership, or Deaconship,] and therefore we do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, depose from the office and degrade from the rank of a Christian Minister, [or, Elder or Deacon,] the said A. B., and do prohibit him from exercising his office or any of the functions thereof. (If the sentence include suspension or excommunication, the Moderator shall proceed to say,) We do, moreover, in the same Venerable Name, suspend the said A. B. from the sacraments of the Church until he shall exhibit satisfactory evidence of sincere repentance, [or, exclude the said A. B. from the sacraments, and cut him off from the fellowship of the Church.]”

The sentence of deposition ought to be inflicted with solemnities similar to those already prescribed in the case of excommunication.

CHAPTER XI.

OF THE REMOVAL OF CENSURES.

I. After any person has been suspended from the sacraments, it is proper that the rulers of the Church should frequently converse with him as well as pray with him in private, that it would please God to give him repentance. And it may be requisite likewise, particularly on days preparatory to the dispensing of the Lord’s Supper, that the prayers of the Congregation be offered up for those unhappy persons who, by their wickedness, have shut themselves out from this holy communion.

II. When the court shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of an offender, he shall be admitted to profess his repentance, either in the presence of the court alone, or publicly, according to the manner in which the sentence had been inflicted, and be restored to the sacraments of the Church, which restoration shall be declared to the penitent in the words of the following import:

Whereas, you, A. B., have been debarred from the sacraments of the Church [and from the office of the gospel ministry, or eldership or deaconship,] but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church, we, the Session [or Presbytery] of C. D., do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, absolve you from the said sentence of suspension, and do restore you to the full enjoyment of sealing ordinances [and to the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof.]”

After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

III. When an excommunicated person shall be so affected with his state as to be brought to repentance, and to desire to be readmitted to the privileges of the Church, the session having obtained sufficient evidence of his sincere penitence shall, with the advice and concurrence of the Presbytery, proceed to restore him, requiring him to make pub-

lic confession. In order to which, the Moderating Minister shall inform the Congregation of the measures which have been taken with the excommunicated person, and of the resolution of the Session to receive him again to the communion of the Church.

On the day appointed for his restoration, when the other parts of divine service are ended, before pronouncing the blessing, the Minister shall call upon the excommunicated person, and propose to him, in the presence of the Congregation, the following questions:

“Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sin in thus rebelling against God and in refusing to hear his Church; and do you acknowledge that you have been in justice and mercy cut off from the communion of the Church? *Answer*—I do. Do you now voluntarily profess your sincere repentance and contrition for your sin and obstinacy; and do you humbly ask the forgiveness of God and of His Church? *Answer*—I do. Do you sincerely promise, through divine grace, to live in all humbleness of mind and circumspection; and to endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by having your conversation as becometh the gospel? *Answer*—I do.”

Here the Minister shall give the penitent a suitable exhortation, addressing him in the bowels of brotherly love, encouraging and comforting him. Then he shall pronounce the sentence of restoration in the following words:

“Whereas you, A. B., have been shut out from the communion of the Church, but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church: in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his authority, we, the session of this Congregation, do declare you absolved from the sentence of excommunication formerly denounced against you; and we do restore you to the communion of the Church, that you may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation.”

The whole shall be concluded with prayer and thanksgiving, and the people dismissed with the usual blessing.

IV. The restoration of a deposed officer, after public confession has been made in a manner similar to that prescribed in the case of the removal of censure from an excommunicated person, shall be announced to him by the Moderator in the following form, viz:

“Whereas you, A. B., formerly a Minister of this Presbytery, [or a Ruling Elder or Deacon of this Congregation,] have been deposed from your office, but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by His authority, we, the Presbytery of C. D., [or the Session of this Congregation,] do declare you absolved from the said sentence of deposition formerly inflicted upon you; and we do furthermore, in the same Venerable Name, restore you to your said office, and to the exercise of all the functions thereof, wherever you may be orderly called thereto.”

After which there shall be prayer with thanksgiving, and the members of the court shall extend to him the right hand of fellowship.

V. When the censure of excommunication or deposition has been inflicted by a Church-session, it cannot be removed without the advice of the Presbytery. Nor, even after an Elder or Deacon has been absolved of the censure of deposition, can he be allowed to resume the exercise of his office in the Congregation without the consent of the people.

VI. When a person under censure shall remove to a part of the coun-

try remote from the court by which he was sentenced, and shall desire to profess repentance and obtain restoration, it shall be lawful for the court, if it deems it expedient, to transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the Session (or Presbytery) where the delinquent resides, which shall take up the case, and proceed with it as though it had originated with itself.

VII. In proceeding to restore a suspended or deposed Minister, it is the duty of the Presbytery to exercise great caution; first admitting him to the sacraments, afterwards granting him the privilege of preaching for a season on probation, so as to test the sincerity of his repentance and the prospect of his usefulness; and finally restoring him to his office. But the case shall always be *sub judice* until the sentence of restoration has been pronounced.

CHAPTER XII.

OF CASES WITHOUT PROCESS.

I. In cases in which any person commits an offence in the presence of the court, or comes forward and makes known his offence to the court, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded, and judgment rendered without process, the offender always having the privilege of being heard. Should the sentence be appealed from, some member or members of the court shall be appointed to represent the appellee in the case.

II. When a communicating member shall confess before the Church-session an unregenerate heart, and there is no evidence of other offence, the court may debar him, for his sin of unbelief, from the Lord's table, until repentance, and shall publish this sentence to the Congregation. His name shall thereupon be transferred to the roll of non-communicating members, with whom he shall then be faithfully warned of his guilt in disobeying the Gospel, and encouraged to seek the redemption freely offered in Christ. But this action shall not be taken until the Church-session has ascertained, after mature inquiry and due delay, that this confession does not result from Satanic temptation or transient darkness of spirit. This rule shall not, however, be applied to the case of those who willfully absent themselves from the Lord's table, which is always an offence.

III. Whenever any Minister, against whom there is no charge, is fully satisfied in his own conscience that God has not called him to the ministry, and there is satisfactory evidence of his want of acceptance to the Church, if the Presbytery, after full deliberation, concur with him in judgment, it may divest him of his office without censure, and he shall resume the position of a private member. This rule shall apply, under like circumstances, to the case of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

IV. When a member or officer renounces the communion of this Church by joining an evangelical Church, if in good standing, the irregularity shall be recorded, and his name erased. But if charges are pending against him, they may be prosecuted. If the denomination be heretical, an officer may be suspended, excommunicated, or deposed without trial; but a private member shall not be otherwise noticed than as above prescribed.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE MODES IN WHICH A CAUSE MAY BE CARRIED FROM A LOWER
TO A HIGHER COURT.

I. Every kind of decision which is formed in any Church court, except the highest, is subject to the review, and liable to the censure of a superior court, and may be carried before it in one or other of the four following ways, to wit: general review and control, reference, appeal, or complaint.

II. When a matter is transferred in any of these ways from an inferior to a superior court, the members of the inferior shall not lose their right to sit, deliberate and vote in the case in the higher courts, except that either of the original parties may challenge the right of any members of the inferior court to sit, which question shall be decided by the vote of all those members of the superior court, who are not members of the inferior.

Section I.—Of General Review and Control.

I. It is the duty of every court above a Church-session, at least once a year, to review the records of the proceedings of the court next below. And if any lower court shall omit to produce them, either immediately, or at a particular time, as circumstances may require.

II. In reviewing the records of an inferior court, it is proper to examine, *First*, Whether the proceedings have been constitutional and regular; *Secondly*, Whether they have been wise, equitable, and for the edification of the Church; *Thirdly*, Whether they have been correctly recorded; *Fourthly*, Whether the injunctions of the superior courts have been obeyed.

III. In most cases the superior court may be considered as fulfilling its duty, by simply recording on its own minutes the animadversion, the correction of proceedings, or the censure which it may think proper to pass on the records under review; and also by making an entry of the same in the book reviewed. But it may be that, in the course of review, cases of irregular proceedings may be found so disreputable and injurious as to demand the interference of the superior court. In cases of this kind, the inferior court may be required to review and correct its proceedings.

IV. In cases of process, however, no sentence of an inferior court shall be reversed, unless it be regularly brought up by appeal or complaint.

V. Courts may sometimes entirely neglect to perform their duty, by which neglect heretical opinions or corrupt practices may be allowed to gain ground; or offenders of a very gross character may be suffered to escape; or some circumstances in their proceedings, of very great irregularity, may not be distinctly recorded by them; in any of which cases their records will by no means exhibit to the superior court a full view of their proceedings. If, therefore, the superior court be well advised that such neglects or irregularities have occurred on the part of the inferior court, it is incumbent on it to take cognizance of the same, and to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter as completely as if it had been recorded, and thus brought up by the review of the records.

VI. When any court having appellate jurisdiction shall be advised, either by the records of a lower court, or by memorial (either with or without protest,) or by any other satisfactory method, of any important delinquency or grossly unconstitutional proceedings, the first step to be taken is to cite the court alleged to have offended, to appear by representative or in writing, at a specified time and place, and to show what it has done or failed to do in the case in question. The court thus issuing the citation may reverse or redress the proceedings of the court below in other than judicial cases; or it may censure the delinquent court; or in case of heresy or other gross offence, it may dissolve that court, assigning the members thereof to the jurisdiction of other co-ordinate courts; or it may remit the whole matter to the delinquent court, with an injunction to take it up and dispose of it in a constitutional manner; or it may stay all further proceedings in the case, as circumstances may require.

VII. In process against an inferior court, being a body ecclesiastic, the trial shall be conducted according to the rules provided for process against individuals, so far as they may be applicable.

Section II.—Of References.

I. A reference is a representation made by an inferior court to a superior, of a matter not yet decided, which representation ought always to be in writing.

II. Cases which are new, important, difficult, or of peculiar delicacy; the decision of which may establish principles or precedents of extensive influence; on which the sentiments of the inferior court are greatly divided; or on which, for any reason, it is highly desirable that a larger body should first decide, are proper subjects of reference.

III. References are either for mere advice, preparatory to a decision by the inferior court; or for ultimate decision by the superior.

IV. In the former case, the reference only suspends the decision of the court from which it comes; in the latter case, it totally relinquishes the decision, and submits the whole case to the final judgment of the superior court.

V. Although references may in some cases, as before stated, be highly proper, yet it is, generally speaking, more conducive to the public good that each court should fulfil its duty by exercising its judgment.

VI. A reference ought, generally, to procure advice from the superior court; yet that court is not bound to give a final judgment in the case, but may remit the whole case, either with or without advice back to the court by which it was referred.

VII. References are generally to be carried to the court immediately superior.

VIII. In cases of reference, the court referring ought to have all the testimony and other documents duly prepared, produced, and in perfect readiness, so that the superior court may be able to consider and issue the case with as little difficulty or delay as possible.

Section III.—Of Appeals.

I. An appeal is the removal of a cause already decided, from an inferior to a superior court, the peculiar effect of which is to arrest

sentence until the matter is finally decided. It is allowable only in cases where judgment has been rendered, and to the party against whom it has been rendered.

II. In cases of judicial process, those who have not submitted to a regular trial are not entitled to appeal.

III. Any irregularity in the proceedings of the inferior court; a refusal of reasonable indulgence to a party on trial; declining to receive important testimony; hurrying to a decision before the testimony is fully taken; a manifestation of prejudice in the case; and mistake or injustice in the decision, are all proper grounds of appeal.

IV. Every appellant is bound to give notice of his intention to appeal, and also to lay the reason thereof in writing before the court appealed from, either before its rising or within ten days thereafter. If this notice or these reasons be not given to the court while in session, they shall be lodged with the Moderator or Clerk.

V. Appeals are generally to be carried in regular gradation from an inferior court to the one immediately superior.

VI. The appellant shall lodge his appeal and the reasons of it with the Clerk of the higher court before the close of the second day of its Session; and the appearance of the appellant and appellee shall be either personal or in writing.

VII. In taking up an appeal in judicial cases, after ascertaining that the appellant on his part has conducted it regularly, the first step shall be to read the record in the case; the second, to hear the parties, first the appellant, then the appellee; thirdly, the roll shall be called, and the final vote taken.

VIII. The decision may be either to confirm or reverse, in whole or in part, the decision of the inferior court; or to remit the cause for the purpose of mending the record, should it appear to be incorrect or defective; or for a new trial.

IX. If an appellant, after entering his appeal to a superior court, fail to prosecute it, it shall be considered as abandoned, and the sentence appealed from shall be final. And an appellant shall be considered as abandoning his appeal, if he do not appear before the court appealed to by the second day of its meeting next ensuing the date of his notice of appeal, except in cases in which it shall appear that he was prevented from seasonably prosecuting his appeal by the providence of God.

X. If an appellant is found to manifest a litigious or other unchristian spirit in the prosecution of his appeal, he shall be censured according to the degree of his offence.

XI. If a sentence of suspension or of excommunication from Church privileges, or of deposition from office, be the sentence appealed from, it shall be considered as in force until the appeal shall be issued.

XII. If any court shall neglect to send up the record of the case, especially if thereby an appellant, who has proceeded with regularity on his part, is deprived of the privilege of having his appeal seasonably issued, such court shall be censured according to the circumstances of the case, and the sentence appealed from shall be suspended until the record is produced, upon which the issue can be fairly tried.

Section IV.—Of Complaints.

I. A complaint is a representation made to a superior against an inferior court. Any member of the Church, submitting to its authority,

may complain against every species of decision, except where a party, against whom a judgment has been rendered, takes his appeal against it. But the complaint shall not suspend, while pending, the effect of the decision complained of.

II. Notice of complaint shall be given in the same form and time as notice of appeal.

III. The parties to a complaint shall be denominated complainant and respondent; and the latter shall be the court against which the complaint is taken. After the superior court has ascertained that the complaint is regular, its first step shall be to read the record of the case; its second to hear the complainant; its third to hear the respondent by its representative; and then it shall consider and decide the case.

IV. The superior court has discretionary power, either to annul any portion or the whole of the decision complained of, or to send it back to the inferior court with instructions for a new hearing.

V. The court against which complaint is taken, is bound to send up its record in the case, as heretofore provided.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF DISSENTS AND PROTESTS.

I. A dissent is a declaration on the part of one or more members of a minority in a court, expressing a different opinion from that of the majority in a particular case. A dissent unaccompanied with reasons is always entered on the records of the court.

II. A protest is a more solemn and formal declaration by members of a minority bearing their testimony against what they deem a mischievous or erroneous judgment, and is generally accompanied with a detail of the reasons on which it is founded.

III. If a protest or dissent be couched in decent language, and is respectful to the court, it shall be recorded; and the court may, if deemed necessary, put an answer to the protest on the records along with it. But here the matter shall end, unless the protestors obtain permission to withdraw their protest absolutely, or for the sake of amendment.

IV. None can join in a protest against a decision of any court, excepting those who had a right to vote in said decision.

CHAPTER XV.

OF JURISDICTION.

I. When any member shall remove from one congregation to another, he shall produce satisfactory testimonials of his Church-membership and dismissal before he be admitted as a regular member of that congregation, unless said congregation has other satisfactory means of information.

II. In case a Church member or officer shall remove his residence beyond the bounds of the court to which he belongs into another, if he shall neglect for twelve months, without satisfactory reasons given to both these courts, to transfer his ecclesiastical relations, the court, whose bounds he has left, shall be required to transfer the same. And

should that court neglect this duty, the one into whose bounds he has removed shall assume jurisdiction, giving due notice to the other body.

III. Members of one Congregation dismissed to join another, shall be held to be under the jurisdiction of the congregation dismissing them, till they form a regular connexion with that to which they have been dismissed.

IV. The Church being a commonwealth, the privileges and obligations of its members attach to them wherever they may go. Hence any court, cognizant of gross and scandalous offences against morals committed by a Church member or officer in the midst of the community surrounding it, is bound to institute process, take the testimony, and forward it to the court having jurisdiction of the delinquent member or officer.

V. Communicating members, if their residence be unknown for three years, shall be held to be suspended members until they give satisfaction; of which due record shall be made.

VI. Should the conduct of such members meanwhile be known to the Session, on satisfactory grounds, to have been inconsistent with a Christian profession, and should uncertain or distant residence render the institution of a prosecution virtually impracticable, they shall be suspended from the communion of the Church until proper satisfaction shall be given in their case.

VII. When a Presbytery dismisses a Minister, probationer or candidate, the name of the Presbytery to which he is dismissed shall always be given in the certificate, and he shall remain under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery dismissing him, until received by the other.

VIII. No certificate of dismissal from either a Session or a Presbytery shall be valid for a longer period than one year, unless its earlier presentation be hindered by some providential cause; and such papers given to their bearers, after they have left the bounds of the Session or Presbytery giving them, shall only certify the standing of such persons up to the time of leaving those bounds.

IX. Offences committed by members during the interval between receiving and presenting certificates, or between leaving one congregation or presbytery, and offering themselves for reception by another, shall be made cases of process by the court within whose bounds the facts have occurred. But if such offences have not come to light until the new relation has been formed, the duty of discipline shall devolve on the new body.