

A Defense of the Government of the Church of Scotland

Samuel Rutherford

1642

Being Chapter 20 of his

[A Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul's Presbytery in Scotland](#)

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Whether or Not the Government of the Church of Scotland can be Proved by God's Word to be Lawful?

1st Article

Of the Doctrine and Worship of the Church of Scotland

We acknowledge the scriptures of God contained in the Old and New Testaments to contain the whole doctrine of faith and good manners, our Covenant rejects all traditions contrary, without and beside the word of God, and so it rejects all religious observances, all human ceremonies, all religious symbolic signs, all new means of worshipping God, all images, positive rites which have any influence in God's worship as will-worship and impious additions to God's word (Jer. 7:7; 2 Sam. 7:7; Deut. 12:32; Deut. 4:2; Lev. 10:2; Heb. 1:13; Heb. 7:14; 1 Chron. 15:13; 1 Kings 12:32; Matt 15:14; Rev. 22:18), whereas they lack warrant from God's word.

All actions of divine worship, all religious means of worship, all actions of moral conversation must be warranted by [in Greek] 'kathos gegraptai,' 'according as it is written', for the which cause our Church condemns kneeling in the act of receiving the Lord's Supper, all holy days dedicated to God or saints, except the Lord's day, confirmation, bed-communion, surplice, corner-cap, etc., because they are acts of worship and religious means of worship, not according to the Word, as is clearly shown to the reader by the following categoric tables [immediately below], where all right worship, moral acts of discipline and conversation that are lawful will bide the trial of this (according as it is written) even to the last specific and individual human act. And where the last individual act is proved, all the rest in that same category are proved: as when I prove Peter to be a man, I prove him to be a sensitive creature, a living creature, a bodily substance, etc., which no man sees in the category of human ceremonies and unlawful offices.

Hence our first category, as it is written, Matt 26:26:

1. The worship of God
2. Sacramental worship
3. Partaking of the Supper of the Lord
4. Partaking of the Lord's Supper in this time and place by Peter, James, Anna

So in the officers of the New Testament, as it is written, Col. 4:17; Phil. 2:25:

1. A lawful minister of the New Testament
2. A lawful pastor
3. Archippus Epaphroditus,

So, as it is written, 1 Cor. 5:4,5:

1. An act of discipline
2. An act of church censure
3. An act of the eldership of Corinth excommunicating the incestuous man

The like may be said of an act of charity to the poor, 1 Cor. 16:1

But come to the category of Formalists, and you shall see a great defect, and this ('as it is written') shall be lacking four times, as the diagram following does show plainly:

Not written:

1. Order and decency, as it is written, 1 Cor. 14

- 2 Orderly ceremonies of human institution
3. Sacred symbolic signs of religion's institution devised by men
4. Surplice, crossing
5. A surplice upon William, Thomas, the crossing of this infant John, made by this Pastor Thomas, this day and place

So the reason is clear why we will have nothing undetermined by Scripture in either acts of the first or of the second table [of the ten commandments], except mere circumstances of persons, time, and place which add no new morality to the actions, is because we hold the Word of God to be perfect in doctrine of faith, and manners, and all points of discipline, which the patrons of ceremonies, and human prelates are forced with papists to deny.

2nd Article

Officers of the Church

The ordinary officers of our Church are:

- (1) Pastors, to whom belongs the word of exhortation, 1 Tim. 3:1-3; 2 Tim. 1:7,8
- (2) Doctors, who in schools expound the word of God, and convince gainsayers, Rom. 12:7,8; Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28
- (3) Governors, or governing Elders who rule well, Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; Acts 15:23
- (4) Deacons who care for the poor, Acts 6:2-4; 1 Tim. 3:8-12

As for the prelate who is pretended to be the pastor of pastors, and an ecclesiastical creature, having majority of power, both of order and jurisdiction above the pastor and doctor, the Church of Scotland did ever repute such an one the fifth element, and the sixth finger in the hand, as having no warrant in the Word, and therefore unlawful (Ex. 25:9; Heb. 8:5; 1 Chron. 8, 19:11-13; 1 Kings 6:38), as also expressly condemned (Luke 22:24-26; 1 Pet. 5:3,4; Matt 18:18; 1 Cor. 5:4-6; Acts 1:23; Acts 15:24).

In the first constitution and infancy of our Church there were some visitors and superintendents for planting of churches, because breasts and hair of our churches were not grown, after the example of the apostles, who sent such to plant, and visit churches, and appoint elders in congregations (Acts 8:14,15,16; Acts 13. 14:15,16; Acts 14, 23; Titus 1:5,6,7,8,9; Acts 21:17,18), but after the church was planted there was no need of such.

Titular [by title] doctors who were pastors only, and taught not in the schools, but were only previous dispositions to episcopacy, as the color blue prepares a cloth for purple, our church never allowed, upon the grounds of allowing lawful doctors as the Scripture does (Rom. 12:7,8; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

3rd Article

Calling of Officers, Especially Pastors

Francis Junius¹ makes according to God's word three parts of the pastor's calling:

1. Election, some call it nomination

¹ 1543-1602, a continental reformed theologian.

2. Presentation, or offering of the man

3. Confirmation

When a place is vacant in the ministry with us:

1. A pastor makes a sermon of the necessity of [having] a pastor, showing what a person the pastor should be, after the example of Peter (Acts 1:22). The looking out of a man [searching for a pastor] is sometimes given to the multitude of believers, with us, according to that, Acts 6:3. The apostles say, 'Wherefore, brethren, look ye out seven men'. But ordinarily this begins at the presbytery, or college of pastors, from whence things take their beginning (Acts 1:15). And in those days (when the church lacked an apostle) Peter stood up and said [so] (Acts 6:2), then the twelve called the multitude. When they lacked deacons (Acts 21:18), the matter is brought first to the eldership (Acts 11:30), [and] the disciples' charity is sent to the eldership. Paul sent Timothy, Titus, Sylvanus, whom after the multitude did approve (Acts 14:22, 2 Cor. 8:16), and so do we.

2. The person [candidate for being the pastor] is tried by Timothy and Titus, and so by the presbytery, his ability, that he be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:3), that he be apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9), else the Timothies of the Church lay hands suddenly on him, contrary to 1 Tim. 5:22.

So the presbytery tries according to these canons with us, his skill in the languages: Latin, Hebrew, and Greek; his ability of preaching popular sermons, and interpreting Scripture, in controversies, in chronology, and the history of the Church, and he must be proved and tried by the people, by preaching sundry sermons to them (1 Tim. 3:10), and let these first be proved, and let them use the office, whatever officers they shall be, Pastors, Doctors, Elders or Deacons.

Also his grace and godliness is tried by both people and presbytery (1 Tim. 3:2,3), his ability to govern (1 Tim. 3:4,5; Acts 6:3; Titus 1:7-9), his fidelity (2 Tim. 2:2), and he must bring a testimonial or Christian letters of recommendation, from those amongst whom he lived, as 1 Tim. 3:7.

3. When all this is done he is not yet a pastor. Then a day is appointed, wherein an edict is read and affixed on the church door, and another day set for his

ordination, at which day the edict is called, all who have anything to object against his life and doctrine are thrice publicly at the church door invited to come and object. And this we think is [in Greek] 'episkepein andra,' (Acts 6:3) and 'dokimazein andra,' (1 Tim. 3:10) 'to find out' and 'to try the man'.

The day of ordination is a day of fasting and praying for God's blessing to the ministry, as Acts 13:23. And they ordained them elders in every Church, and prayed with fasting (Acts 13:3), and when they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them. The presbytery and people meeting, some pastor (as Acts 1:15) preaches for the purpose in hand, as Peter does there (Acts 1:17-19). After the sermon the pastor calls him up before the congregation, and demands if he be willing to accept the charge, and he must testify his consent as Isaiah (Isa. 6:8; Jer. 6:7,8; Acts 9:20). Then the pastor asks the peoples' consent, which they testify by their [in Greek] 'keiro onia', 'the lifting up of their hands' (as Acts 14:23), and the man must please the whole multitude (as Acts 6:5; 1:26).

This being done, the pastor comes down out of the pulpit, and he with the Presbytery lays their hands on his head, and prays that God would bless him, as the apostles did (Acts 6:6). The apostles prayed and laid their hands on them (Acts 13:3). They prayed and laid their hands on them (1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Tim. 5:22), all being done, the eldership of the congregation give him the right hand of fellowship (as Gal. 2:9). The action is closed with thanksgiving, as all grave actions should be (Thess. 5:18).

And this order in substance is kept in ordaining doctors, elders, and deacons. Here are no popish toys, which papists use in ordination, no man is obtruded upon the flock against their consent, and no man appointed a pastor but of a certain flock (as Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2).

4th Article

Pastor's Duty

The pastor teaches sound doctrine (1 Tim. 3:1), often thrice in the week, which is in season and out of season (1 Tim. 4:2). The people are called to the church meeting by the ringing of a bell, to give warning of the time of public worship, as Israel was convoked by sound of trumpet at God's commandment (Num. 10:2; Joel 2:1). The pastor first preaches a little before the public worship to waken up the people's attention, as the Lord does (Ex. 20:2), the prophets (Isa. 1:20), and Peter (Acts 2:14).

He begins the worship with prayer and praising, and closes therewith (as the apostles, Acts 20:18,19,36; Matt 26:30, as the church of Corinth added to prophesying praying and the singing of Psalms, 1 Cor. 14:14-17, and as this moral worship was ordinary to the Jews). The order is natural. Paul begins his epistles with prayers and closes with praises. The pastor reads a text (as Christ did, Lk. 4:6-9), expounds Moses, the prophets and the rest of the Scriptures (as Christ does, Lk. 24:27) and confirms and proves ([in Greek:] 'sumgigazei') the points which he propounds (as Paul does, Acts 9:22, and Peter, Acts 10:43). And lastly he applies the doctrine to the present use and consciences of the people (as did the prophets, Isa. 1:11-12; 5:7-9; Jer. 22:15-17, and the apostles, Acts 4:11; 2:36-37; 5:30-31; 1 Cor. 1:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:15).

The doctors' way is doctrinal, to inform the mind and defend the truth against gainsayers (Rom. 12:7). We acknowledge no reading pastors but only pastors gifted, who are able to cut the word aright (2 Tim. 2:15), are apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), are able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:15), sent of God to preach (Rom. 10:15), and to whom this grace is given to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). We have no pastors who may administer the sacraments but may not and cannot preach the word (such being contrary to Christ's ordinance, Matt 28:18,19; 1 Cor. 1:14-17).

The pastors, besides public preaching and praying in our church, are also to catechize the flock (Gal. 6:5; Heb. 5:12-13; 6:1-3; 1 Cor. 3:1-3), visit the flock (Cant. 7:11-12; Eze. 34:4; Rom. 1:13; Acts 14:22-23,27; 20:17-18), are especially to exhort and pray over the sick (Jam. 5:14) and to strengthen the exercised in conscience (Job 33:23-24), and that in every house (as Acts 10:34; 5:42).

5th Article

Baptizing

The minister or pastor only may baptize, as he only may preach the word (as Matt 28:19; Jn. 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:14-16). Our baptizing is conjoined with the Word preached going before (as the charter has the seal added to it and as the apostolic church practiced, Acts 10:44-48; 8:35-39; 19:4-6) and the prayers of the pastor and people going before, for a blessing to the ordinance (as the just analogy which it has with the other sacrament of the Lord's Supper requires, which has prayer going before, Matt 26:26, and because the very nature of so blessed a sacrament requires prayer). No other element is used but nature (as Acts 8:39; Jn. 3:23; Matt 5:16).

No ceremony but Christ's own action of external washing or sprinkling (as baptizing with water signifies, Heb. 9:10; Jn. 3:23; Acts 8:39) is used (and that in our cold country), seeing it does aptly express sprinkling with Christ's blood (1 Pet. 1:2). It is used being applied with the words of the institution: 'in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' (as Matt 28:19).

The place of baptizing is in the public meeting of the church, which receives the child in her fellowship (as Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 4:20,21). The presenter of the child is the father, or some friend if he be dead or absent, because the child is received in the covenant because the fathers are within the covenant, and so sealed with the same seal of the covenant (Acts 2:37,38; Rom. 11:14; Gen. 17:7-10). The action is closed with thanksgiving, as all grave [actions], but especially actions of God's worship, should be ended (1 Chron. 16:7,8,9), and as the other sacrament is closed (Matt 26:30).

6th Article

The Lord's Supper

These only are admitted to the Lord's Supper who, in the judgment of charity, have tried and examined themselves (1 Cor. 11:28). The profane and scandalous are debarred from this table (as Matt 7:6; Ps. 50:16,17), this sacrament requiring a self-examination going before (1 Cor. 11:28). Therefore a sermon of preparation is preached the day before, even as Christ prepared and dieted his guests with heavenly sermons preceding the action (as is clear, Luke 22:14,15; Mark 14:18-20; Matt 26:21-23; John 13:13-16).

A table is covered, not an altar erected (as is Luke 22:21; John 13:28). A sermon for the purpose in hand is preached before, as Christ does (John 13:18-20; Matt 26:22,23), as a sermon goes before baptism (Acts 8:35,39; Acts 19:4-6). The banqueters sit down at table, even as Jesus sat down with the twelve disciples (as is Matt 26:20,28; Mark 14:18,22), the Lord honoring them with table-honor with Himself (as is clear, Luke 22:21; John 13:24,28).

The pastor takes the bread, and before he break it, he gives thanks, and prays for the blessing of the elements, to the end and use appointed by Christ, even as Christ did (Matt 26:26) and thereafter takes the bread, rehearses the words of the institution, and breaks the bread, and gives to the banqueters, and they divide it amongst them, at Christ's commandment, as also he takes the cup, and says, 'Drink ye all of this, this is the New Testament', etc., as Christ did (Matt 26:26,27; Mark 14:22,23; Luke 22:17,19,20).

In the mean time, while the people are eating and drinking, the pastor is speaking of Christ's love in dying for man, of the Lord's death, of faith required in annuntiating [announcing] the Lord's death till he come again, even as Christ all the while entertained his guests with heavenly sermons (as is clear, Matt 26:28,29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:21,22; John 13), and having done, they sing a Psalm, as Christ and his disciples did (Matt 6:28; Mark 14:26), all the while elders in reverend and decent manner attend the service of the table as the banquet requires.

For that some serve at that Supper is gathered from Matt 26:19; Mark 14:15, where mention is made of a large upper room furnished and

prepared, which is a clear warrant for a large table, a clean and fair tablecloth, basins, cups, and vessels decent and comely for that service, and from Christ his girding Himself with a towel, and washing their feet, and standing as a servant (John 13:4-6; Luke 22:27).

The nature of the sacrament requires thanksgiving, and therefore in the afternoon a sermon of thanksgiving is preached, which is also warranted from Matt 26:30.

7th Article

Public Fasting

The fast is indicted [called and set] eight days before, and the causes laid open for preparing of the people for humiliation (as Joel 2:1-3; Isa. 22:12,13). We have no anniversary [annual] and set fasts or feasts either, because God Himself by his judgment imminent, or already inflicted, or by permitting his people to follow their own ways, calls to fasting and mourning (Isa. 22:13, Joel 2:1-6, etc.), and so by his mercies and wonderful deliverances calls to extraordinary joy of thanksgiving (Ps. 118:24). The doctrine of the Law is preached (as Joel 2 and Isa 58), and the fast observed with abstinence from meat and drink, and carnal and ordinary pleasures (Joel 2:16).

We think to deny the lawfulness of public fasting on the Lord's day (as if the Christian Sabbath were a day only of spiritual feasting and rejoicing, because that day Christ ended the work of redemption and second creation) is a wronging of the Christian Sabbath, which is ordained for the whole public worship of God, joying, sorrowing for sin, and learning God's will in all and every point, as the Jewish Sabbath was not ordained only for meditation on the work of creation, but for worships of all kinds. The worship of this day (Acts 20:7) is as large as preaching, being in the Spirit on the Lord's day, seeing the visions of God (Rev. 1:10-12), and the whole ordinary public worship. It is then too narrow to restrict all our Sabbath worship to one single act of

festival rejoicing.

8th Article

Marriage

Marriage is no sacrament, but because it is not a contract merely human, and God is said to join the parties together (Matt 19:6), and God first married Adam and Eve: we think it fit that the pastor, who is the ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), should join them together and instruct them in the doctrine of marriage (Gen. 2:18,19; Matt 19:3,4; Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7) as it is expressed by God.

For eschewing of scandals, harlotry, forbidden marriages, for obtaining consent of parents and vice-parents, and hearing of parties contracted to the parties to be married, proclamation of the purposed marriage is needful, that we give no offence (1 Cor. 10:32,33; 1 Cor. 7:29).

9th Article

Burial

As coming in the world, so neither interring and burial is performed in the Word of God with preaching, reading service over the dead, singing scriptures (as papists), which tend to superstition, therefore we use only with a company of Christians in decent manner to convey the corpse to the earth with moderate mourning, conference

of our mortality, as Sarah (Gen. 23:2,19), Abraham (Gen. 49:31), Joshua (Josh. 24:30), Samuel (1 Sam. 25:1-3), and Josiah were buried.

The place of burial with us is not under the altar or the place of assembling, or the Church for the word or sacraments, as papists do, but in some public place either near the church or some enclosed field, because the Jews buried sometimes in a cave (Gen. 25:9), sometimes in a valley (Deut. 34:6) and sometimes in a garden (2 Kings 21:18; John 19:41).

10th Article

Schools and Doctors

There are with us doctors of divinity who teach in schools and universities, men tried to be holy and learned, and then put in office (as 1 Tim. 3:10), under whose instruction are students aiming at the holy ministry, called expectants, as in the Jewish church in their colleges were young prophets, or sons of the prophets (as 1 Sam. 10:5; 2 Kings 2:7; 2 Kings 4:1; 1 Kings 20:35). These doctors and also the teachers of human literature, who train up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4), if they aim at the ministry, prophesy in our presbyterial meetings (1 Cor. 14:29).

11th Article

Elders and Deacons

Elders help the pastors in governing but labor not in the Word and doctrine (1 Tim 5:17), and yet visit the sick, oversee the ways and manners of the people, and so rule with diligence (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28), and judge with pastors and doctors (Matt 18:18-20).

Deacons are officers who judge not authoritatively, neither preach the Word nor administer the sacraments, but attend tables, or take care of the church's rents, and show mercy with cheerfulness (Acts 6:3,4; Rom. 12:8), being tried to be grave, sober, and faithful, are put in office (1 Tim. 3:10).

Upon the first day of the week everyone lays by in store as God prospers him, giving it in to abroad at the church door for the relief of the poor (as 1 Cor. 16:2). It is provided that ministers have competent stipends (as 1 Cor. 9:13), and that hospitals be upheld (Matt 25:35,36; Eccl. 11:1,2), and that the fabric of the church be upheld by the patron and free-holders (as Mal. 1:10; Hag. 1:4; Hag. 2:16).

12th Article

Church Assemblies and the Power of Censures

There are assemblies in our Church, as were in the apostolic church (Acts 1:15,16; Acts 6:2,3,4; Acts 11:1,2,3; Acts 15:6,7,8, etc.). They handle only matters merely ecclesiastical, what is scandalous, and what may edify (Matt 18:18-20; 1 Cor. 5:5,6), but no things civil which belong to the civil magistrate (Luke 22:25-27; Luke 12,13,14,15; Rom. 13:4,5,6, compared with Rom. 12:6,7,8).

Assemblies in our Church are of four sorts:

1. Sessions of every particular congregation who have power of discipline in things belonging to themselves, such as is to rebuke publicly those who sin publicly (as 1 Tim. 5:20), to admit or not admit to the sacrament, to order decently the public worship (1 Cor. 11:20,21; 1 Cor. 14:33,40; Tit. 1:5). Hence there was an eldership ordained in every church (Acts 4:23). Also seeing every particular congregation is a visible ministerial church, having power of the keys in preaching the Word, though they be but a small number (as two or three assembled in Christ's name, Matt 18), yet have they a promise of Christ of his presence for binding and loosing (Matt 18:18-20) in things which belong to themselves.

2. The second assembly is a classis [presbytery] of many pastors and elders from sundry congregations who have power of excommunication, (1) in respect [case] that the person excommunicated does keep company with many consociated [associated] churches and so as a leaven may infect many (1 Cor. 5:4; Matt 26:59; John 11:47; Acts 20:17,18); (2) and for this cause, one pastor of a single congregation, is not able to ordain a pastor (because it wants example in the Word of God).

Therefore a college of presbyters, or a presbytery of pastors and elders, who have power larger than a session, even to excommunicate and ordain pastors, is necessary in the church, which ordains Timothy to be a pastor, and so may deprive and excommunicate him (1 Tim. 4:14, Acts 20:17,18,28,29).

These are to assemble together, and to prophecy two or three by course, and others sitting by are to judge, that every man's gifts may be tried by the presbytery and the church edified (1 Cor. 14:27-32), and howbeit these prophets were extraordinarily gifted, yet their preaching by courses and the authoritative trying and judging of the gifts of the prophets and pastors cannot be extraordinary, for if that were extraordinary and temporary, there should be now in the church no college of pastors who are to try the pastors, that they lay not hands on them suddenly (1 Tim 5:22), and are to take care to commit the Gospel to faithful men who are able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:5): therefore is this presbytery in our church (1 Tim. 4:14).

3. The third assembly is the meeting of many pastors of a province, or a greater number of congregations, who handle matters of discipline which concern the whole province and many more congregations, which differs not from the

presbytery, but that it is a greater presbytery containing more pastors and elders. So we think, because there were many pastors and elders at Jerusalem than at Corinth. Therefore the meeting of pastors and elders of Jerusalem and the churches about (Acts 21:18,19) was a provincial assembly, so the meeting of the elders of Ephesus, being more than an ordinary presbytery, because of the multitude of that church (Acts 19), was of the nature of a provincial assembly or a greater presbytery (Acts 20:17,18).

4. The fourth assembly is a general assembly of many provinces and is a clear warrant of our national assembly (as Acts 1:15, where the eleven apostles were; Acts 6:2 where the twelve apostles were, and Acts 15 where Jerusalem, Antioch, Syria, and Sylicia are met in their principal guides, apostles, brethren, elders).

With us the king or his commissioner is present, as in the national assembly of the Jews was King David (1 Chron. 13:1,2), Asa (2 Chron. 15:9), Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:4, Josiah, 2 Chron. 34:29). For the king bears the sword and is there as a politic president and nursing father (Isa. 49:23; Rom. 13:4).

The members of the council are pastors, doctors, elders (as Acts 15:23), sent by the churches for that effect (Acts 15:2,3). All the churches have place to speak, propound and reason in an orderly way, as there the multitude spoke (Acts 15:12,13), but none have decisive voices save only commissioners, as apostles and elders (Acts 15:2,6; 16:4; 21:25). The acts of the assembly oblige all the absents not present in all their members (as Acts 15:23,24,28; 16:4; 21:25), not because of the authority of the church, but because of the matter which is necessary and agreeable to God's word (as Acts 15:14-18).

In this assembly a moderator is chosen who orders, propounds, and gathers the voices (as Acts 15, either James or Peter). Silence is kept that one only speak at once (as Acts 15:7, first Peter, after him Barnabas and Paul, v. 12, after them James, v. 13), and these who speak are to speak to the assembly or moderator, not to parties (as 15:13, 'Men and brethren'). Also a clerk is chosen who writes the acts of the assembly (as Acts 15:23); they [the clerks] wrote letters after this manner. The commissioners carry home from the scribe of the assembly the decrees of the pastors and elders to be observed by them (as Acts 16:4). Christian prudence and nature's light teaches the time and place for the next assembly to be appointed most conveniently, for the ease of all the churches.

Where matters are difficult to inferior assemblies, parties are wronged, and there is no small dissension, then references and appeals are made to the greater assemblies, and they determine that Paul and Barnabas, or A. B. and S., go to Jerusalem or the place of the next assembly to the pastors and elders about this question (as Acts 15:1,2).

1. All our inferior assemblies have brotherly correspondence by mutual advice and counsel one with another, but none have authoritative power over another (as 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-3; Col. 4:17). By reason of our assemblies, no man though most eminent in gifts, piety, or authority, may play the Diotrophes (3 John 10), or has power to cast out the brethren out of the church.

2. By assemblies, order of gifts and subordination of the part to the whole is maintained, as Antioch is inferior to both Antioch, Jerusalem, Syria and Cilicia convened in a synod (Acts 15:23, compared with 15:28 and ch. 6). Both the Church of the Hebrews, and the Church of the Grecians are subject to a synod of apostles and disciples (Acts 15:2), and Peter a pillar of the church, and Paul inferior to none of the greatest apostles, are subject to synods (Acts 11:1-3; Acts 21:19-21), etc.

3. By assemblies, schisms, dissensions (Acts 15:2) and errors or heresies subverting the souls of those of particular churches (Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, Acts 15:23,24), are removed out of the church and unity is preserved. In keeping of the decrees of the assemblies particular churches do well (Acts 15:28), and so are the churches established in the faith, increase in number daily (Acts 16:4,5), religion is restored to its purity, and the land enters into covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, rejoice at the oath, seek the Lord with their whole desire, and He is found of them (2 Chron. 15:12-15). And this have we found, so long as we were as Judah who ruled with God and was faithful with the saints (Hos. 11:12), and went not to Gilgal, nor up to Beth-Aven (Hos 4:15).

In church censures we proceed thus: In private faults if a brother offend a brother, he is admonished alone by the offended. If that gain him not, he is admonished before two or three; if that prevail not, the matter is brought before the

church, which has power of the keys; if he obey not the Church, he is excommunicated (Matt 18:15-20).

In more heinous and public faults the scandalous person is not so dealt with. But where the fault is gross and heinous, the offender more quickly is delivered to Satan (as 1 Cor. 5:4; 1 Tim. 1:19,20). Where obstinacy and willful impenitency is added to lesser scandals, the offender is excommunicated (as 1 Thess. 3:14), yet with great meekness and longanimity: for he is three Lord's days publicly admonished, and three Lord's days publicly prayed for, as this gentleness is required in the Lord's servants (2 Tim. 24,25) before they cut off any (1 Cor. 4:21).

The public censures of the churches are rebukes in public as Paul requires (1 Tim. 5:20). That the rebuke may be public and the rebuked may make public confession before the offended congregation:

1. He stands in a public place, which we call the stool or pillar of repentance, which has both a warrant (1) by nature's light, which requires that he who speaks to a multitude should stand in a place where all may commodiously hear to whom he speaks (as Judg. 9:7; Deut. 27:12,13); (2) and also in Scripture, by Solomon's example, who on a scaffold spoke to the people (1 Chron. 14:30), and the practice of Ezra who read to the people the book of the Law in a pulpit of wood which they had made for the purpose (Neh. 8:4), which also is a warrant for a pulpit.

2. To this public rebuking, there is a second censure adjoined, which is a debarring of the offender from the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28), which is our lesser excommunication.

3. Our third censure is the greater excommunication, which is done by the whole congregation, as all other censures, but in diverse ways: (1) by the presbytery or eldership judicially and authoritatively, (2) by Paul his pastoral spirit (1 Cor. 5:4), the minister in the church's name pronouncing the sentence (1 Tim. 1:20), (3) and by the people,

1. Consenting and approving (1 Cor. 5:4-6)

2. Mourning and being humbled at the sin (1 Cor. 5:2)

3. Abstaining from all brotherly fellowship and familiarity with him, (1 Cor. 10:11,12):

Except where the law of nature require duties of us, as the son to the excommunicated father owes love and honor, and conversing with him (Ex. 20:12). For a commandment natural and simply moral obliges more, and in the room before the positive and lesser commandment (as Hos. 6:6; Matt 12:3-6).

Yet is the excommunicated excluded only from the public prayers and seals of the Covenant, not from private prayers and hearing of the Word (1 Thess. 3:15). For the church intends in that censure the saving of his spirit in the day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:5), and the hearing of the word is that necessary means of salvation (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18,21; Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23). The contrary order not unlike to this is kept in confirming authoritatively the church's love to the excommunicated person being penitent, and in pardoning and forgiving him when he heartily sorrows for his sin (2 Cor. 2:6-10). From this censure no member of our church is exempted.

Yea a scandalous pastor is by the presbytery deprived and excommunicated, as he was ordained by them (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim. 2:14). And he who has committed crying and heinous sins is scarce ever to be readmitted in the ministry, as being hardly found such an one as is described (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1:5-7), except it be seen to all that he has obtained mercy in a conspicuous and large measure (as 1 Tim. 1:13-16).

13th Article

Private Worship

None may preach the word with us but pastors, the sons of the prophets, and such of their sort who aim at the holy ministry. And that ecclesiastical authority must

warrant them is clear by our law and practice, as it was in the Jewish Church (1 Sam. 10:5; 2 Kings 2:7; 2 Kings 4:1; 1 Kings 20:35).

The worship of God is commanded by our assemblies to be in private families, as catechizing by the master of the family (or some other better gifted in every family; Deut. 6:6-8; Gen. 18:19; Eph. 6:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:15), and praying (Zech. 12:10).

None by any act of our church, whether pastor or any other, in office, or out of office, is obliged to a stinted or read prayer, as the word of God allows (Rom. 8:26,27). Yea, here it is free to all, having the spirit of adoption to express their particular necessities (which cannot well be booked) to God according to the present case of the church and person praying, as the saints have done (Ps. 88:9; Ps. 5:7; Ps. 28:2; Ps. 121:1; Ps. 123:1. John 17:1; Luke 18:13 and Ps. 3; Ps. 5; Ps. 25; Ps. 30; Ps. 34; Ps. 54; Ps. 57; Ps. 63, etc.). Yet did our church never condemn, but constantly practice the praying of that divine and canonical prayer of our Savior, called the Lord's prayer, as being commanded (Matt 6:9; Luke 11:2) in matter and manner, though affirmative precepts oblige not *ad semper*.

Also singing of Psalms is commanded by our church in families (as Ex. 29:39; Ps. 55:17; Eph. 5:18-20), and [so is] house-discipline (as Job 1:3; Deut. 21:18. Ps. 101:7) and private fasting in families (Neh. 1:4; Esth. 4:16; Zech. 12:11).

Our assembly also commands godly conference at all occasional meetings, or as God's providence shall dispose, as the word of God commands (Heb. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:11,12; Lev. 19:17; Zech. 8:21; Mal. 3:16; Col. 3:16), providing none invade the pastor's office to preach the word who are not called thereunto by God and his Church (Heb. 5:4,5; Rom. 10:14-15; 1 Cor. 12:28,29). And by that same warrant the grieved in conscience is to confess his sins which trouble and press down his soul, to either an experienced Christian or pastor (as James 5:16). But this confession is free to the grieved party; I mean free from being canonically commanded in our assemblies, and far from sacramental confession, or auricular [audible] confession to a priest.

The End