

to pervade all its operations, and there will be no need of essential change. But we must carefully distinguish local and temporary features from what properly belongs to Presbyterianism; otherwise we may find ourselves contending for defects and abuses, while we refuse to employ methods which are sanctioned both by the principles of Presbyterianism and its history. Important functions of the Presbyterian system, have, in some places, it may be, fallen into disuse, and thus it may happen that the revival of true methods shall be regarded as innovation.

Presbyterianism is sometimes understood as embracing the doctrines of the Reformed Church as well as its polity. We do, of course, hold the maintenance and faithful preaching of the doctrines to be, above everything else, essential to the work of our Church. There is no charm in the form of Church government, so that of itself it should secure not only activity and harmony but also spiritual life. If the essential teachings of the Gospel are compromised there can be no compensation for so great a defect: and should forms of government, less Scriptural than ours, prove more faithful to evangelical doctrine they will bear better fruit. To deny this were to be not merely sectarian but utterly unchristian.

Assuming, however, that Presbyterianism is true to the Gospel, let us indicate some of the advantages of its polity, and also how that polity may be applied so as to yield the best results. All that is here necessary is carefully to study the history of our Church in its several branches, and to mark the procedure and the spirit which have accomplished most good. There is little need of experiment or suggestion of things entirely new.

The offices of elder and of deacon have been treated of, and we are now to speak, rather, of what may be effected in other ways, on the true lines of Presbyterianism; especially of action which grows out of the unity of the Church as illustrated in our system, and which looks beyond the congregation and the session or consistory.

Presbyteries, Synods, General Assemblies, etc., should seek above all to promote the *spiritual welfare* of the congregations connected with them. This statement looks like a truism and yet it is necessary to be made and insisted upon. Church courts