

6. 'And the Apostles and Elders came together for to consider of this matter.'

V. What is a Church Session?

It is the ruling Elders of any particular congregation met as a Church Court. It may be called a congregational Presbytery. 1 Cor. v. 4, 13. 'In the name of the Lord Jesus, when you are gathered together.' 'Put away from among yourselves that wicked person.'

VI. In what manner should the business of the Session be conducted?

The meeting should be constituted by prayer, in the name of Christ, each member called on by the moderator to give his opinion on the subject under consideration, and the question afterwards decided by a majority of votes. Its decision may be appealed from to the Presbytery.

VII. How are matters brought before the Session for judgment?

By any Elder, as an overseer of the Church; or by any other person preferring a complaint, or presenting a memorial.

VIII. Who are subject to the authority of Session? All the members of the Church of which it has the oversight.

IX. What is the duty of each Church towards the Session?

To respect and uphold that authority which is given it by Christ; to render a cheerful obedience to its decisions, in the Lord; and cordially co-operate in the plans of usefulness which it recommends. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. 'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. And to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.'

X. Of what does a Presbytery consist?

Of the Ministers of a convenient district, with a ruling Elder from each congregation.

XI. What is the extent of its jurisdiction?

It extends to its own members, and to the several Sessions and congregations belonging to it. It is a Court of Appeal from Sessions, and has the general oversight of the congregations under its care. An appeal lies from its decision to the Synod.

XII. Of what does a Synod consist?

It consists of the Ministers of several Presbyteries, with a ruling Elder from each Session. In the Presbyterian Churches of Ireland, it is the Supreme Court of jurisdiction and appeal. But in other more numerous and extended Churches there is also a General Assembly, composed of a specific number of Ministers and ruling Elders, appointed by the Presbyteries.

XIII. Does the New Testament furnish any model of Presbyterian Government by such Church Courts?

It does, in the 15th chapter of the Acts.

XIV. How does the 15th chapter of Acts establish that form of Church government?

The facts therein recorded for our example, furnish its outline or general principles. In the Church at Antioch a question was disputed, affecting the faith and practice of all the Churches of Christ. Ver. 1, 2. It was referred, for settlement, to an assembly to be convened at Jerusalem. Ver. 2. The Assembly consisted of the Rulers of the Church, but was open to the people. Ver. 6, 12. It acted in a deliberative capacity. Ver. 7, 12, 13. It decided, not by direct inspiration but by discussion and consideration, under the ordinary guidance of the Holy Ghost. Ver. 7, 22, 25. One member of the Assembly proposed a resolution, which was unanimously adopted as its decision on the question. Ver. 19, 22. The decree thus enacted was authoritative, and extended to all the Churches. Ver. 25; and ch. xvi. 5. These principles

are applied in government, with all the necessary and expedient details, to particular congregations, by the Session; to the Churches of a convenient district, by the Presbytery; and to the whole Church, by Synod or General Assembly. 'This is the Law of the house.' Ezek. xliii. 12. 'Let all things be done decently, and in order.' 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

CHAPTER III.

Discipline of the Church.

I. What is the Scriptural character of a Christian Church?

1. It is a society of persons separated from the rest of mankind. John xvii. 16. 'They are not of the world.' Acts xix. 9. 'When divers were hardened, he departed from them, and separated the disciples.'

2. Professing to believe in Christ. Acts viii. 37. 'He answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'—To be sanctified by his Spirit. 1 Cor. i. 2. 'Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth; to them that are sanctified.—And to observe his ordinances. 1 Cor. xi. 2. 'And keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you.' Matt. xxviii. 20. 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.'

II. By what means is this character to be preserved?

By the faithful exercise of a Scriptural discipline. 1 Cor. v. 7. 'Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.' (See context.)

III. What should be the conduct of a Church Court in exercising discipline?

It should be, 1st *orderly*. 1 Cor. xiv. 40. 'Let all things be done decently, and in order.' 2d. *Meek*. Gal. vi. 1. 'Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.' 3d. *Solemn*. 1 Pet. iv. 11. 'If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.' 4th. *Impartial*. 1 Tim. v. 21. 'Doing nothing by partiality.'

IV. In admitting to membership in the Church, are the Rulers bound to receive those *only* who are *really* saints?

That any man is *really* a saint, can be known only to God. It would, therefore, be absurd to make what *must* be a *secret* to men, the ground of their forming a judgment. (See Deut. xxix. 29.) Our Lord and his Apostles have taught us, that the *secret state* of the soul is not to be the subject of our judgment, when persons apply for membership in the visible Church. Christ sent forth Judas, an infidel and traitor, as a preacher, admitted him to his fellowship, and perhaps to partake of his supper, (see Luke xxii. 19, 20, 21,) and did not cut him off till he had proved his hypocrisy by an *overt act*. So did inspired Apostles to Simon Magus. (See Acts viii. 13, 23; see also Matt. xxv. 1, 2.)

V. What, then, entitles an individual to the communion of the Church?

His giving a *credible profession* of faith in Christ. Acts xix. 18. 'And many that believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds.' (Acts viii. 12.) But the infants of believers are also to be regarded as members, and as having a title to baptism. Gen. xvi. 7. 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Ver. 12. 'And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised;' compar-