

responsibility of Episcopalianism on the other. It holds a middle place between these two extremes. It occupies the same position towards these in Church-government that a constitutional power does in civil government—the extremes of autocracy and democracy. It takes means through representation in sessions, presbyteries and synods to ascertain the sentiments of the people, and its authority in enforcing its measures is based upon this process conducted in accordance with the principles of the bible, as expounded in certain formularies. All who take part in the proceedings of a Presbyterian Church, are bound to carry out the decisions of its courts. Individual opinions must not interfere with the general action of the body. Ministers and elders vow and members promise to dispense with a small share of their personal independence for the accomplishment of high ends. There is no hardship in this sacrifice; for constitutional means are provided for hearing every complaint and discussing the soundness of every opinion. Thus a Presbyterian Church ought to move in a mass, because it takes every possible means for ascertaining the opinions of the mass before it moves at all. By first manifesting a due respect to the Christian liberties and general wisdom of all its members, it establishes the right of demanding a reciprocation of respect on their part to its decisions. What we say then is, that until any member of the Church or any section can have their opinions endorsed by the body they have no right in a Presbyterian Church to follow an *independent or congregational course*. In the matter of *collections*, a minister or missionary, if he will be true to his colors, can do nothing but make them when the day comes; and an individual presbytery that takes a course of its own in important measures, is doing more injury to Presbyterianism than the most eloquent and learned disquisitions in its defence could do good.

A case of some interest is now pending before the civil courts in Scotland. Macmillan has prosecuted the Free Church Assembly and craves damages for the injury done to him by that court, which he avers has violated its own constitution. The real question at issue is; how far Mr. Macmillan has by contract placed himself in the power of his ecclesiastical superiors. That he has sacrificed part of his personal independence, both parties are agreed; but Macmillan avers, that, in the exercise of an irresponsible power claimed by them, [and which said gentleman lauded vastly, when in this country, as also railed against the contrary with the greatest violence,] they have taken more liberties with his maintenance and good name than he engaged to submit to. The silly and dangerous position taken by the Free Church is, that they may exceed their engagement or not, as they please,—that they are the sole judges of the case in all its aspects, and that, because,

as they say, the civil courts have no business with the case at all, they will not produce the papers necessary to show, whether or not they have acted within their powers. All this discussion proceeds upon the supposition that a minister sacrifices part of his independent action, and for the glory of God and the good of men promises to be guided by others. In reward for this, he receives a certain respect, enjoys particular privileges of public aid private instruction, and ordinary people, engrossed with the business of the world, expect him to keep them in mind of their spiritual duties and, among others, keep them up to the mark in liberality to the cause of the Redeemer. It is meant by this, to show that, in a Church of Christ, it is absolutely necessary that, whatever private opinions individuals may hold in general measures, constitutionally and deliberately agreed upon, all must go together, as in all other societies where common sense is not abjured for individual whims.

We are weak enough to be true and sincere believers in the scripturalness and expediency of Presbyterian Church Government. There is no more convincing evidence of its soundness than the general movement among Episcopalians to obtain synodical action on the one hand, and the existence among Congregationalists of what they are pleased to call “Unions” on the other. The dwellers on the uncomfortable extremes of the despotism of one man and the despotism of the crowd feel the need of betaking themselves to the golden mean, the temperate zone of a constitutional system, that neither places the rights and interests of the people wholly in the hands of the clergy, nor subjects a class of men, who have sacrificed a considerable degree of personal liberty for the privilege of doing good, to the whims and sudden phrenzies of the fickle crowd. But pure and ravishing as our ideal of a Presbyterian Church is, the actual and present forms come far short of it, and we often ask ourselves: Shall we be privileged to see, before leaving this agitated world, a Presbyterian Church worked out according to its principles; transfusing into its members a spirit of enlightened Christianity; disseminating a religion worthy of its great founder; diffusing among the people a just veneration for antiquity, for the great movements of the 16th century, and for the various Protestant Churches rising out of them; and a disposition to keep pace with the times, in a temperate advance; inducing in the minds of the people a pride in, respect for, and enlightened obedience to, their Church Courts, and pre-eminently exhibiting a clergy, each man of whom feels bound to carry out in good faith the enterprises which the united and constitutional wisdom of the Church Courts have stamped with approbation? In this corrupt world we despair of beholding such a spectacle; but, small as we are, we have the best right to be such a