

It was the age when men believed in the Divine right of Kings, and when the liberty and well-being of the subject were but a secondary consideration. In church matters some believed in the Divine right of the Papacy, others in the Divine right of Prelacy, others in the Divine right of Presbytery, and some in the Divine right of ecclesiastical democracy, and each religious sect or community could not entertain the thought of tolerating the existence of its rivals. That would be a sin. It was a duty to God and to the commonweal for the Papist to burn the heretical Protestant. It was equally meritorious on the part of the Prelatist to destroy the Presbyterian; and our Covenanting forefathers felt it to be their sacred duty to "extirpate" prelatists and malignants. The Independents during their short lease of power in England did their best to "extirpate" rival sects. They burnt witches and Quakers in New England, as Papists burnt heretics in the old world. Indeed all sects down to a comparatively recent period felt it to be a sacred duty to burn or otherwise destroy old women of wrinkled faces and eccentric manners under the name of witches.

But a strong reaction has taken place. Sects that once had the liveliest faith in witches hardly believe that there is a God. Communions in which once *death* was the punishment for nonconformity to mere outward ceremonies, *now* permit men who sap the very foundations of the christian faith, to enjoy the highest offices in their gift without any efficient attempt to discipline them. New England furnishes examples of the first; Old England of the second:—Germany of both.

In all communions the tendency of late years has been to disregard discipline—to forget that it is of Divine appointment,—that it is one of those scriptural means and ordinances which God has given for the perfecting of the mystical body of Christ.

God has given both civil and ecclesiastical government for the well-being of human society. Woe to the church or the state that neglects that divine ordinance, or becomes unfaithful or unjust in its administration! We are responsible to God for the

exercise of it; we must not let it lie mused; and we are also responsible for its *right* exercise.

The exercise of a godly discipline in the House of God has, under His blessing, been one of the principal means in preserving the orthodoxy and purity of the Presbyterian church in its various branches and in many countries. It has never administered discipline with the harsh cruelty with which it was exercised in other churches, neither has the reaction been so violent in the opposite direction. Still the danger at present is on the side of laxity. It becomes us as a church carefully to survey our position and act accordingly. The fence must be kept up and repaired if the garden is to be preserved from the ravages of wild leasts. The noisome weeds must also be plucked out if it is to be for beauty and for praise and for goodly fruit. This is a work demanding great care, discretion and tenderness. Our church has acted wisely in appointing a large committee for the preparing a Book of Discipline; and that committee have done prudently not to hurry their important work through. It is well to avail ourselves as a church of the experience of other churches—just as a young Christian profits by marking the steps of those who are riper in the Lord.

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#### LETTER FROM REV. D. MORRISON.

I find that one of the things from which I shrunk has fallen to my lot—to be much in print before the public. However, hoping that my being so placed may be in some humble measure conducive to the advancement of those interests for which we should be willing to live and die, I acquiesce.

In my last I gave you some details regarding the meeting of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Glasgow with a brief allusion to the meeting of the United Presbyterian Synod in Edinburgh. If my memory serves me, I had the pleasure of attending nearly all the sederunts of that Synod. Let me add further that through the kindness and courtesy of Dr. Johnston, of Nicholson Street Church, Edinburgh, I had the privilege and honour of sitting in that venerable court as a corresponding member. I made