

**THE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE
*UNITED STATES OF AMERICA***

CONTAINING
THE
CONFESSION OF FAITH,
THE
CATECHISMS,
THE
GOVERNMENT and DISCIPLINE,
AND THE
DIRECTORY for the WORSHIP of GOD,

Ratified and adopted by the SYNOD OF NEW-YORK
and PHILADELPHIA, held at PHILADELPHIA
May the 16th 1788, and continued by adjourn-
ments until the 28th of the same Month.

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THE
FORM
OF THE
GOVERNMENT and DISCIPLINE
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



INTRODUCTION.

The Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, judging it expedient to ascertain and fix the system of union, and the form of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in these United States, under their care; have thought proper to lay down, by way of introduction, a few of the general principles by which they have been hitherto governed: and which are the ground work of the following plan. This, it is hoped, will, in some measure prevent those rash misconstructions, and uncandid reflections, which usually proceed from an imperfect view of any subject; as well as make the several parts of the system plain, and the whole plan perspicuous and fully understood.

The Synod are unanimously of opinion;

I. That "God alone is Lord of the conscience; and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men; which are in any thing contrary to his word; or beside it in matters of faith or worship: Therefore, they consider the rights of private judgement, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and alienable: They do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power further than may be necessary for protection and security, and, at the same time, equal and common to all others.

II. That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union and association of particular Churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its COMMUNION, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed: That, in the exercise of this right, they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow: yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty, or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

III. That our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments; but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation both of truth and duty: and, that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name the act, to censure, or cast out, the

erroneous and scandalous; observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the word of God.

IV. That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness; according to our Saviour's rule, "by their fruits, ye shall know them." And that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd, than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, They are persuaded, that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise, it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it.

V. That while, under the conviction of the above principle, They think it necessary to make effectual provision, that all who are admitted as Teachers, be found in the faith; They also believe, that there are truths and forms, with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ: And in all these, they think it the duty, both of private Christians and Societies, to exercise mutual forbearance towards each other.

VI. That though the character, qualifications, and authority of Church-officers, are laid down in the Holy Scriptures, as well as the proper method of their investiture and institution; yet the election of the persons, to the exercise of this authority, in any particular society, is in that society.

VII. That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or, in the way of representation, by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative: That is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws, to bind the conscience, in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God: Now though it will easily be admitted, that all Synods and Councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity; yet there is much greater danger, from the usurped claim of making laws, than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the Gospel; although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.

VIII. Lastly, That, if the preceding Scriptural and rational principles be steadfastly adhered to, the vigour and strictness of its discipline will contribute to the glory and happiness of any Church. Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object; and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever, but from its own justice, the approbation of an

impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church universal.

The F O R M, & c.

C H A P. I.

Of the Church.

SECT. I. JESUS CHRIST, who is now exalted, far above all principality and power, hath erected, in this world, a kingdom, which is his church.

SECT. II. The universal church consists of all those persons, in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ, and of submission to his laws.

SECT. III. As this immense multitude cannot meet together, in one place, to hold communion, or to worship God, it is reasonable, and *warranted by scripture example*, that they should be divided into many particular churches.

SECT. IV. A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated together, for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the holy scriptures; and submitting to a certain form of government.

C H A P. II.

Of the Officers of the Church.

Extraordinary officers. OUR blessed Lord, at first, collected his church, out of different nations, and formed it into one body, by the mission of men endued with miraculous gifts, which have, long since, ceased.

Perpetual officers. The ordinary and perpetual officers, in the church, are Bishops or pastors; the representatives of the people, usually stiled *Ruling Elders*, and *Deacons*.



C H A P. I I I.

Of Bishops or Pastors.

THE pastoral office is the first, in the church, both for dignity and usefulness. The person who fills this office, hath, in the scripture, obtained different names expressive of his various
Names, &c. duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed Bishop^{**}. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed Pastor. As He serves Christ in his church, he is termed Minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example of the flock, and to govern well in the house and kingdom of Christ, he is termed Presbyter or Elder. As he is the messenger of God, he is termed the Angel of the church. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed Ambassador. And, as he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed Steward of the mysteries of God.



C H A P. I V.

Of Ruling Elders.

RULING Elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them, for the purpose of exercising
Name &c. government and, discipline, in conjunction with Pastors or Ministers. This office has been understood, by a great part of the protestant reformed churches, to be designated, in the holy scriptures, by the title of governments: and of those who rule well; but do not labour in the word and doctrine.

* As the office and character of the gospel minister is particularly and fully described, in the holy scriptures, under the title of Bishop; and as this term is peculiarly expressive of his duty, as an overseer of the flock, it ought not to be rejected.



C H A P. V.

Of Deacons.

THE scriptures clearly point out Deacons as distinct officers in the church, whose business it is to take care of the poor, and to distribute among them the collections which may be raised for their use. To them also may be properly committed the management of the temporal affairs of the church.

Name, &c.

C H A P. VI.

Of ordinances in a particular Church.

THE ordinances, established by Christ the head, in a particular church, which is regularly constituted with its proper officers are prayer, singing praises, reading expounding, and preaching the word of God; administering baptism and the Lord's supper; public solemn fasting and thanksgiving; catechising, making collections for the poor, and other pious purposes; exercising discipline; and blessing the people.

Ordinances of
the church.

C H A P. VII.

Of Church Government, and the several kinds of Judicatories.

SECT. I. It is absolutely necessary that the government of the church be exercised under some certain and definite form: And we hold it to be expedient, and agreeable to scripture and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the church be governed by congregational, Presbyterian and synodical Assemblies. In full consistency with this belief, we embrace, in the spirit of charity, those christians who differ from us, in opinion or in practice, on these subjects.

Different
Judicatories.

SECT. II. These assemblies ought not to possess any civil jurisdiction, nor to inflict any civil penalties. Their power is wholly moral or spiritual, and that only ministerial and declarative. They possess the right of requiring obedience to the laws of Christ; and of excluding the disobedient and disorderly, from the privileges of the church. To give efficiency, however, to this necessary and scriptural authority, they possess the powers requisite for obtaining evidence and inflicting censure: They can call before them any offender against the order and government of the church; They can require members, of their own society, to appear and give testimony on the cause; but the highest punishment, to which their authority extends, is to exclude, the contumacious and impenitent, from the congregation of believers.

Their Powers.

C H A P. V I I I.

Of the Congregational Assembly, or Judicatory, usually styled the Church Session.

SECT. I. The church Session consists of the Minister, or Ministers, and elders of a particular congregation.

SECT. II. The church session is competent to the spiritual government of the congregation: For which purpose, they have power to inquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members of that church; to call before them offenders and witnesses, being members of their own society, and to introduce witnesses from other societies, or denominations, where it may be necessary, to bring the process to issue; and when they can be procured to attend; to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend, or exclude,

from the sacraments, those who are found to deserve the censures of the church; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation; and to appoint delegates to the higher judicatories of the church.

SECT. III. The minister hath a right to convene the session when he may judge it requisite. And he ought, in all cases, to convene them, when requested by any two or more of the Elders.

SECT. IV. We think it proper, that every church session keep a fair register, of births, of baptisms, of marriages, of persons admitted to the Lords table, of deaths in the society, and of other removals.

C H A P. I X

Of the Presbyterial Assembly.

SECT. I. The church being divided into many separate congregations, these need mutual counsel and assistance, in order to preserve soundness of doctrine, and regularity of discipline; and to enter into common measures, for the promoting of knowledge and religion, and for the preventing of the encroachments of infidelity and error. Hence arise the importance and usefulness of presbyterial and synodical assemblies.

SECT. II. A presbytery consists of all the Ministers, and one ruling elder from each congregation, within a certain district.

SECT. III. Every congregation, which has a settled pastor, has a right to be represented, in presbytery, by one elder; and every collegiate church, by two or more elders, in proportion to its Ministers. Where there are two or more congregations united, under one pastor, all such congregations shall have but one elder to represent them. Every congregation, which has no settled Minister, and is able and willing, to support one, shall be entitled to be represented, by a ruling elder, in this judicatory. And where there are two or more such congregations, united for the maintenance of the gospel, and in their united state, are of the description

aforesaid, then such united congregations may be represented by one elder. Every elder, not known to the Presbytery, shall produce a certificate of his regular appointment, from the church which he represents.

SECT. IV. Any three Ministers, and as many elders as may be present, belonging to the Presbytery, being met, at the time and place appointed, shall be a judicatory, competent to the dispatch of business; notwithstanding the absence of the other members.

SECT. V. The Presbytery have cognizance of all things, that regard the welfare of the particular churches within their bounds, which are not cognizable by the session. They have also a power of receiving and issuing appeals from the sessions; and references, brought before them in an orderly manner; of examining, and licensing candidates for the gospel ministry; of ordaining, settling, removing, or judging ministers; of examining, and approving or censuring the records of the sessions; of resolving questions of doctrine or discipline, seriously and reasonably proposed; of condemning erroneous opinions, that injure the purity or peace of the church; of visiting particular churches, to inquire into their state and redress the evils that may have arisen within them; of uniting, or dividing Congregations, at the request of the people; and of ordering what ever pertains to the spiritual concerns of the Churches under their care. And it shall be the duty of the Presbyteries to report, to the Synod, licensures, ordinations, the dismissing or receiving of members; and the removal of members by death.

SECT. VI. The Presbytery shall meet on their own adjournment; and, when any emergency shall require a meeting, sooner than the time to which the Judicatory stands adjourned, the Moderator shall, with the concurrence, or at the request, of two Ministers and two Elders, the Elders being of different Congregations, call a meeting of the Presbytery, by a circular letter sent to every Minister, and to the session of every vacant Congregation having a right to send a representative to the judicatory, in due time previous to the meeting; which time shall be ascertained and recorded by each Presbytery, and shall not be less than ten days: and nothing shall be transacted, at such special meeting, besides the particular business for which the judicatory has been thus convened.

SECT. VII. At each meeting of Presbytery, a sermon shall be delivered, if convenient; and every particular session shall be opened and concluded with prayer: The roll shall be called, and the meeting recorded by the clerk, who shall enter the names of the members present, and also of those ministers who are absent.

C H A P. X.

Of the Synodical Assembly.

SECT. I. As a Presbytery is the convention of the Bishops and Elders, within a certain district; so a Synod is the convention of several Presbyteries, within a larger district.

Constituent
Members of
Synod.

Sect. II. The Synod have power to admit and judge of appeals, regularly brought up from the Presbyteries: To give their judgment on all references, in ecclesiastical cases, made to them: To review the Presbytery books: To redress whatever hath been done by Presbyteries contrary to order: To take effectual care that Presbyteries observe the constitutions of the Church: To make such regulations, for the benefit of their whole body, and of the Presbyteries and Churches under their care, as shall be agreeable to the word of God, and not contradictory to the decisions of the General Assembly, and to propose, to the General Assembly, for their adoption, such measures as may be of common advantage to the whole Church.

Powers
thereof.

C H A P. X I.

Of the General Assembly.

Sect. I. The General Assembly is the highest judicatory of the Presbyterian Church; and shall represent in one body, all the particular Churches of this denomination; and shall bear the style and title of THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Style of the
highest
Judicatory of
the
Presbyterian
Church.

Sect. II. The General Assembly shall consist of an equal
delegation of Bishops and Elders, from each
Constituent Members of the General Assembly. Presbytery, in the following proportion: viz. each
Presbytery, consisting of not more than six Ministers,
shall send one Minister and one Elder; each
Presbytery, consisting of more than six Ministers and not more than
twelve, shall send two Ministers and two Elders; and in like
proportion, for every six Ministers, in any Presbytery: And these
delegates, so appointed, shall bear the title of COMMISSIONERS TO THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Sect. III. Any fourteen, or more, of these commissioners, one half
of whom shall be ministers, being met, on the day, and at
the place appointed, shall be competent to form a General
Assembly, and to proceed to **siness.**
Quorum thereof.

The Assembly shall receive and issue all appeals
and references, which may be regularly brought before
them from the inferior judicatories; they shall review the
minutes and proceedings of every Synod, to approve or censure
them; they shall give their advice and instructions, in all other
cases submitted to them; and they shall also constitute the bond of
union, peace, correspondence, and mutual confidence, among all
our Churches.
Powers of the Assembly.

Sect. V. To the Assembly also belongs the power of consulting,
reasoning, and judging, in controversies respecting
doctrine and discipline: Of reprovng warning, or bearing
testimony against error in doctrine, or immorality in
practice, in any Church, Presbytery, or Synod: Of
corresponding with foreign Churches: of putting a stop to
schismatical contentions, and disputations: And, in general, of
recommending and attempting reformation of manners; and of
promoting charity, truth and holiness, through all the churches:
and of erecting new Synods, when they judge it necessary.
Other powers of the Assembly.

Sect. VI. Before any overtures or regulations, proposed by the
Assembly to be established as standing rules, shall be
obligatory on the churches, it shall be necessary to
transmit them to all the Presbyteries, and to receive the
returns of, at least, a majority of the Presbyteries, in
Restriction of the power of the Assembly.

writing, approving thereof.

C H A P. X I I.

Of Electing and ordaining ruling Elders and Deacons.

SECT. I. Having defined the officers of the church, and the Assemblies by which it shall be governed, it is proper here to prescribe the modes in which ecclesiastical rulers shall be ordained to their respective offices.

Mode of electing ruling Elders. &c. SECT. II. Every congregation shall elect persons, to the office of ruling Elder, and to the office of Deacon, or either of them, in the mode most approved, and in use in that congregation.

How to be ordained. SECT. III. When any person shall have been elected to either of these offices, and shall have declared his willingness to accept thereof, he shall be set apart in the following manner.

Engagements required of Elders and Deacons. SECT. IV. After sermon, the Minister shall propose to him, in the presence of the congregation, the following questions: *viz.*

1. Do you believe the scriptures, of the old and new Testament, to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt, the confession of faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy scriptures?
3. Do you approve of the government and discipline of the presbyterian church, as exercised in these United States?
4. Do you accept the office of ruling Elder [or Deacon as the case may be] in this congregation, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?

After having answered these questions in the affirmative, he shall be set apart, by prayer, to the office of Elder [or deacon as they case may be;] and the

To be set apart by prayer.

Minister shall give him, and the congregation, an exhortation suited to the occasion.

C H A P. X I I I.

Of licensing Candidates, or Probationers, to preach the Gospel

SECT. I. The holy scriptures require, that some trial be previously had, of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the Gospel, that this sacred office may not be degraded, by being committed to weak or unworthy men; and that the churches may have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the talents of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed. For this purpose Presbyteries shall licence Probationers, to preach the Gospel; that after a competent trial of their talents, and receiving, from the churches, a good report; They may, in due time, ordain them to the pastoral office.

SECT. II. It is proper and requisite, that Candidates, applying to the Presbytery to be licensed to preach the Gospel, produce satisfactory testimonials of their good moral character, and of their being regular members of some particular church. And it is the duty of the Presbytery for their satisfaction with regard to the real peity of such candidates, to examine them respecting their experimental acquaintance with religion, and the motives which influence them to desire the sacred office. And it is recommended, that the candidate be also required to produce a diploma, of bachelor or master of arts, from some college or university: or at least authentic testimonials of his having gone through a regular course of learning.

SECT. III. Because it is highly reproachful to religion, and dangerous to the church, to intrust the holy ministry to weak and ignorant men, the Presbytery shall try each candidate, as to his knowledge of the Latin language; and of the original languages in which the holy scriptures were written. They shall examine him, on the arts and sciences; on theology, natural and revealed; and on ecclesiastical history. And

in order to make trial of his talents to explain and vindicate, and practically to enforce the doctrines of the gospel, the Presbytery shall require of him, an exegesis on some common head of divinity; and Presbyterial exercise; a lecture or explication of a portion of scripture; and a popular sermon: or other similar exercises, to be held, at several successive sessions, till they shall have obtained satisfaction, as to his piety, literature, and aptness to teach in the churches.

SECT. IV. that the most effectual measures may be taken, to guard against the admission of insufficient men into the sacred office, it is recommended, that no candidate, except in extraordinary cases, be licensed; unless, after his having completed the usual course of academical studies, he shall have studied divinity at least two years, under some approved divine, or professor of theology.

The study of divinity must continue at least two years before license.

Engagements required of Probationers, before license

SECT. V. Before the Presbytery proceed to license the candidate, the moderator shall require of him the following engagements: viz.

1. Do you believe the scriptures, of the old and New Testament, to be the word of God, the only fallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the confession of faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy scriptures?
3. Do you promise to study the peace, unity, and purity of the church?
4. Do you promise to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the government of this Presbytery, or of any other Presbytery in the bounds of which you may be?

SECT IV. The candidate having answered these question in the affirmative, and the moderator having offered up a prayer suitable to the occasion, he shall address himself to the candidate, to the following purpose: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by that authority, which he hath given to his church for its edification, we do license you, to preach the Gospel, wherever God in his providence may call you: and for this purpose, may the blessing of God rest upon you, and the spirit of

Manner of licensing.

Christ fill your heart, Amen.” And record shall be made of the licensure, in the following form: *viz.*

At the day of the
Presbytery of having received
sufficient testimonials, in favour of his having gone through a
regular course of literature; of his good moral character; and of his
being in the communion of the church; proceeded to take the usual
parts of trial for his licensure: And he having given satisfaction, as
to his accomplishments in literature; as to his experimental
acquaintance with religion; and as to his proficiency in divinity, and
other studies; the Presbytery did, and hereby do express their
approbation of all these parts of trial: and he having adopted the
confession of faith of this church; and satisfactorily answered the
questions, appointed to be put to candidates to be licensed; the
Presbytery did, and hereby do license him, the said to preach the
Gospel of Christ; as a Probationer for the holy ministry; within the
bounds of this Presbytery, or wherever he shall be orderly called.

SECT. VI. When any candidate shall, by the permission of his
Presbytery, remove without its limits, an extract of this
record, accompanied with a presbyterial
recommendation, signed by the clerk, shall be his testimonials, to
the Presbytery under whose care he shall come.

Testimonials of
a Probationer.

C H A P. X I V.

Of the Election, and Ordination, of Bishops or Pastors.

SECT. I. When any Probationer shall have preached, so much to
the satisfaction of any congregation as that the people
appear disposed to receive him as their minister, the
session shall solicit the presence and council of some
neighbouring Minister, to assist them in preparing a call
for him; unless highly inconvenient on account of
distance: In which case they may proceed without such
assistance.

A Church
disposed to
prepare a Call
in order to
ordination,
shall ask the
assistance of
a minister.

The day for
preparing the
Call shall be
previously
appointed on a
Lord's day.

SECT. II. On a Lord's day, immediately after
public worship, it shall be intimated from the Pulpit,

that all the members of that Congregation are requested to meet, on
ensuing, at the Church, or usual place for holding
public worship; then and there, if it be agreeable to them, to
prepare a Call for to be their Pastor.

SECT. III. On the day appointed, the Minister, whose assistance
has been obtained, shall preach a sermon, at the usual
season for public worship; and after sermon, he shall
announce to the people that he will immediately proceed
to take the votes of the electors of that Congregation, in
the case of whether or not he shall
be chosen to be their minister. In this election, no
person shall be entitled to vote, who refuses to submit
to the censures of the Church, regularly administered;
or who does not contribute his just proportion, according to his own
engagements, or the rules of that Church, to all its necessary
expences.

The Minister
shall receive
the votes of
none but
regular
members and
who punctually
pay towards the
support of the
Church.

SECT. IV. When the votes are taken, if it appear that a great
proportion of the people are averse from the candidate,
and cannot be induced to concur in the call, the
assisting minister shall endeavour to dissuade the
congregation from prosecuting it further. But if the
people be nearly, or entirely, unanimous; or if the
majority shall insist upon their right to call a minister;
then in that case, the minister, after using his utmost
endeavours to persuade the congregation to unanimity, shall
proceed to draw a call in due form, and to have it subscribed by the
electors; certifying, at the same time, the number and
circumstances of those who do not concur in the call: All which
proceedings shall be laid before the Presbytery, together with the
call.

When the
people are not
unanimous the
Minister shall
certify the
number and
circumstances
of the
Dissentients.

The call shall be in the following, or like form
viz.

The form
of a Call. The Congregation of being, on
sufficient grounds, well satisfied of the ministerial
qualifications of you and
having good hopes, from our past experience of your
labours, that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to
our spiritual interests, do earnestly call, and desire you, to

undertake the Pastoral office in said congregation; promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement, and obedience, in the Lord: And that you may be free from wordly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves, to pay to you, the sum of _____ in regular*

payments, during the time of your being, and continuing, the regular Pastor of this Church. In testimony whereof, we have respectively subscribed our names, this _____ day of

A.D.

Attested by A. B. Moderator of the meeting.

SECT. V. But if any congregation shall choose to subscribe their call, by their Elders and Deacons or Trustees, or Committee or either, they shall be at liberty so to do; but it shall, in such case, be fully certified, to the Presbytery, by the Minister, or other person who presided, that they have been appointed, for this purpose, by a public vote of the congregation; and the call has been, in all other respects, prepared as above directed.

A call may, in certain cases, be subscribed by Elders or Deacons.

SECT. VI. When call shall be presented to any Minister or candidate, it shall always be viewed as a sufficient petition from the people for his instalment. The acceptance of a call, by a Minister or candidate, shall always be considered as a request, on his part, to be installed at the same time. And when a candidate shall be ordained, in consequence of a call from any congregation, the Presbytery shall always, at the same time, ordain and instal him Pastor of that congregation.

A call sufficient both for ordination & instalment.

SECT. VII. The call, thus prepared, shall be presented to the Presbytery, under whose care the person called shall be; that, if the Presbytery think it expedient to present the call to him, it may be accordingly presented: And no Minister or candidate shall receive a call, but through the hands of the Presbytery.

The call must be presented to the Presbytery.

Sect. VIII. If the call be to the licentiate of another Presbytery, in that case the Commissioners, deputed from the congregation to prosecute the call, shall produce, to that judicatory, a certificate from their own Presbytery, regularly attested by the Moderator and clerk, that they

How to proceed when the call is to be Licentiate of another Presbytery.

are in order. If that Presbytery present the call to their licentiate, and he be disposed to accept it, they shall then dismiss him from their jurisdiction, and require him to repair to that Presbytery, into the bounds of which he is called; and there to submit himself to the usual trials preparatory to ordination.

Trials for ordination. Sect. IX. Trials for ordination, especially in a different Presbytery, from that in which the candidate was licensed, shall consist of a careful examination, as to his acquaintance with experimental religion; as to his knowledge of Philosophy, Theology, Ecclesiastical history, the Greek and Hebrew languages, and such other branches of learning as to the Presbytery may appear requisite; and as to his knowledge of the constitution, the rules and principles of the government and discipline of the church; together with such written discourse, or discourses, founded on the word of God, as to the Presbytery shall seem proper. The Presbytery, being fully satisfied with his qualifications for the sacred office, shall appoint a day for his ordination, which ought to be, if convenient, in that Church of which he is to be the Minister. It is also recommended that a fast day be observed in the congregation previous to the day of ordination.

Presbytery being constituted a sermon shall be preached, &c. Sect. X. The day appointed for ordination being come, and the Presbytery convened, a Member of the Presbytery, previously appointed to that duty, shall preach a sermon adapted to the occasion. The same, or another Member appointed to preside in this business, shall afterwards briefly recite from the pulpit, in the audience of the people, the proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to this transaction: He shall point out the nature and importance of the ordinance; and endeavour to impress the audience with a proper sense of the solemnity of the transaction.

Engagements required of those who are ordained. Then addressing himself to the candidate, he shall propose to him the following questions: viz.

1. Do you believe the Scriptures, of the Old and New Testament, to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt, the confession of faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy Scriptures?

3. Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian church, as prescribed in the Form of the Government and discipline of the Presbyterian church in these United States?

4. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

5. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry, from love to God, and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the Gospel of his Son?

6. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel, and the purity and peace of the church; whatever persecution, or opposition, may arise unto you on that account?

7. Do you engage to be faithful and diligent, in the exercise of all private and personal duties, which become you as a Christian, and a Minister of the Gospel; as well as in all relative duties, and the public duties of your office, endeavouring to adorn the profession of the Gospel by your conversation; and walking, with exemplary piety, before the flock, over which God shall make you Overseer?

When the candidate is to be ordained as the Pastor of a particular congregation, the following question shall be added.

8. Are you now willing to take the charge of this congregation, agreeably to your declaration at accepting their call? And do you promise to discharge the duties of a Pastor to them, as God shall give you strength?

Sect. XI. The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the Moderator shall demand of the people:

Engagements
required of the
people.

1. Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive _____, whom you have called, to be your Minister?

2. Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth, with meekness and love; and to submit to him, with humility, in the due exercise of discipline?

3. Do you promise to encourage him, in his arduous labour, and to assist his endeavours for your instruction and spiritual edification?

4. And do you engage to continue to him, while he is your Pastor, that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised; and whatever else you may see needful, for the honour of religion, and his comfort among you?

SECT. XII. The people having answered these questions, in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall kneel down, in the most convenient part of the church: Then the presiding Bishop shall, by prayer, and with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, according to the apostolic example, solemnly ordain him to the holy office of the Gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall rise from his knees: and the Minister who presides shall first, and afterwards all the Members of the Presbytery in their order, take him by the right hand, saying, in words to this purpose, "We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part of this ministry with us." After which the Minister presiding, or some other appointed for the purpose, shall give a solemn charge, in the name of God, to the newly ordained Bishop, and to the people, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties; and shall then, by prayer, recommend them both to the grace of God, and his holy keeping; and finally, after singing of a psalm, shall dismiss the congregation with the usual blessing. And the Presbytery shall duly record the transaction.

Mode of
ordination.

C H A P. X V.

Of Translation, or removing a Minister from one charge to another.

SECT. I. No Bishop shall be translated from one church to another, nor shall he receive any call for that purpose, by the permission of the Presbytery.

Translation to
be made by the
Presbytery.

SECT. II. Any church, desiring to call a settled Minister from his present charge, shall, by Commissioners properly authorized, represent to the Presbytery the ground on which they plead his removal. The Presbytery, having

Mode of
procedure in
translations.

maturely considered their plea, may, according as it appears more or less reasonable, either recommend to them to desist from prosecuting the Call; or may order it to be delivered, to the Minister to whom it is directed, together with a written citation, to him and his congregation, to appear before the Presbytery at their next meeting. This citation shall be read from the pulpit in that Church, by a member of the Presbytery appointed for the purpose, immediately after public worship; so that, at least, two Sabbaths shall intervene, betwixt the citation, and the meeting of the Presbytery at which the cause of translation is to be considered. The Presbytery, being met, and having heard the parties, shall, upon the whole view of the case, either continue him in his former charge, or translate him, as they shall deem to be most for the peace and edification of the Church; or refer the whole affair to the Synod, at their next meeting, for their advise and direction.

Mode of
procedure
when the
Minister is of
another
Presbytery.

SECT. III. When the Congregation, calling any settled Minister, is within the limits of another Presbytery, that Congregation shall obtain leave, from the Presbytery to which they belong, to apply to the Presbytery of which he is a member: And that Presbytery, having cited him and his congregation as before directed, shall proceed to hear and issue the cause. If they agree to the translation, they shall release him from his present charge; and having given him proper testimonials, shall require him to repair to that Presbytery, within the bounds of which the Congregation calling him lies, that the proper steps may be taken for his regular settlement in that Congregation: And the Presbytery, to which the Congregation belongs, having received an authenticated certificate of his release, under the hand of the Clerk of that Presbytery, shall proceed to install him, in the Congregation, as soon as convenient. Provided always, that no Bishop or Pastor shall be translated, without his own consent previously obtained.

Instalment
constitutes the
pastoral
relation, &c.

SECT. IV. When any Minister is to be settled in a Congregation, the instalment, which consists in constituting a pastoral relation between him and the people of that particular Church, may be performed, either by the Presbytery, or by a Committee appointed for that purpose; as may appear most expedient: and the following order shall be observed therein.

Notice of the day must be given.

SECT. V. A day shall be appointed for the instalment, at such time as may appear most convenient, and due notice thereof given to the Congregation.

A Sermon shall be delivered, &c.

SECT. VI. When the Presbytery, or Committee, shall be convened and constituted, on the day appointed, a sermon shall be delivered, by some one of the members previously appointed thereto; immediately after which, the Bishop, who is to preside, shall state to the Congregation the design of their meeting and briefly recite the proceedings of the Presbytery relative thereto. And then, addressing himself to the Minister to be installed, shall propose to him the following or similar questions:

Instalment consists in mutual engagements of Minister and People.

1. Are you now willing to take the charge of this Congregation, as their Pastor, agreeably to your declaration at accepting their Call?

2. Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that, in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God, and the good of his Church?

3. Do you solemnly promise, that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavour faithfully to discharge all the duties of a Pastor to this congregation; and will be careful, to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming a Minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeably to your Ordination engagements? To all these having received satisfactory answers, He shall propose to the People the same, or like questions, as those directed under the head of ordination; which having been also satisfactorily answered, by holding up the right hand, in testimony of assent, He shall solemnly pronounce and declare the said Minister to be regularly constituted the pastor of that Congregation. A charge shall then be given to both parties, as directed in the affair of ordination; and, after prayer, and singing a psalm adapted to the transaction, the Congregation shall be dismissed with the usual benediction.

Elders and Heads of families shall give their right hand to their Minister.

SECT. VIII. It is highly becoming, that, after the solemnity of the instalment, the heads of Families of that Congregation who are then present, or at least the Elders, and those appointed to take care of the

temporal concerns of that Church, should come forward to their pastor, and give him their right hand, in token of cordial reception and affectionate regard.

C H A P. X V I

Of resigning a pastoral Charge.

SECT. I. When any Minister shall labour under such grievances, in his Congregation, as that he shall desire leave to resign his pastoral charge, the Presbytery shall cite the Congregation to appear, by their Commissioners, at their next meeting, to show cause, if any they have, why the Presbytery should not accept the resignation. If the Congregation fail to appear, or if their reasons for retaining their Pastor be deemed by the Presbytery insufficient, he shall have leave granted to resign his pastoral charge; of which due record shall be made, and that Church shall be held to be vacant, till supplied again, in an orderly manner, with another Minister: And if any congregation shall desire to be released from their Pastor, a similar process, *mutatis mutandis*, shall be observed.

The
Congregation
must be cited
and heard.

C H A P. X V I I.

Of Missions.

When vacancies become so numerous, in any Presbytery, that they cannot be supplied with the frequent administration of the Word and ordinances, it shall be proper for such Presbytery, or any vacant Congregation within their bounds, with the leave of the Presbytery, to apply to any other Presbytery, or to any Synod, or to the General Assembly, for such assistance as they can afford. And, when any presbytery shall send any of their Ministers or Probationers to distant vacancies, the Missionary shall be ready to produce his credentials to the Presbytery or Presbyteries, through

the bounds of which he may pass, or at least to a Committee thereof, and obtain their approbation. And the General Assembly, may of their own knowledge, send missions, to any part, to plant Churches, or to supply vacancies: And, for this purpose, may direct any Presbytery to ordain Evangelists, or Ministers without relation to particular Churches: Provided always, that such missions be made with the consent of the parties appointed; and that the Judicatory sending them make the necessary provision for their support and reward in the performance of this service.

C H A P. X V I I I.

Of Moderators.

A Moderator necessary. SECT. I. It is equally necessary in the Judicatories of the Church, as in other assemblies, that there should be a Moderator or President; that the business may be conducted with order and dispatch.

The authority and duty of the Moderator. Sect. II. The Moderator is to be considered as possessing, by delegation from the whole body, all authority necessary for the preservation of order; for convening and adjourning the Judicatory; and directing its operations according to the rules of the Church. He is to propose to the Judicatory every subject of deliberation that comes before them. He may propose what appears to him the most regular and speedy way of bringing any business to issue. He shall prevent the members from interrupting each other; and require them, in speaking, always to address the Chair. He shall prevent a speaker from deviating from the subject; and from using personal reflections. He shall silence those who refuse to obey order. He shall prevent members who attempt to leave the Judicatory without leave obtained from him. He shall, at a proper season, when the deliberations are ended, put the question and call the votes. If the Judicatory be equally divided he shall possess the casting vote. If he be not willing to decide, he shall put the question a second time: and if the Judicatory be again equally divided, and he decline to give his vote, the question shall be lost. In all questions he shall give a concise and clear state of the object of the vote; and the vote being

taken, shall then declare how the question is decided. And he shall likewise be empowered on any extraordinary emergency, to convene the Judicatory, by his circular letter, before the ordinary time of meeting.

SECT. III. The Pastor of the congregation shall always be the Moderator of the Church Session; except when, for prudential reasons, it may appear adviseable that some other Minister should be invited to preside: in which case the Pastor may, with the concurrence of the Session, invite such other Minister as they may see meet, belonging to the same Presbytery, to preside in that affair. In this Judicatory, therefore, the Moderator is continual: but, in the vacancy of any Church, the Moderator shall be the Minister sent to them by the Presbytery; or invited by the Session to preside on a particular occasion. In Congregations, where there are Colleagues, they shall, when present, alternately preside in the Session.

The Minister
perpetual
Moderator of
the Church
Session.

SECT. IV. The Moderator of the Presbytery shall be chosen from year to year, or at every meeting of the Presbytery, as the Presbytery may think best. The Moderator, of the Synod, and of the General Assembly, shall be chosen at each meeting of those Judicatories: and the last Moderator present shall open the meeting with a sermon, and shall hold the chair till a new Moderator be chosen.

The Moderators of the
other Judicatories how
to be chosen.

C H A P. X I X

Of Privilege.

It shall be the privilege of any Member of a Judicatory to speak, in his proper order, to any question, with leave from the Moderator. The Moderator shall give leave to the person who first rises; but if two, or more Members, are judged to have risen at the same time, the Moderator shall determine which shall speak first. Any Member shall have a right to propose any question, relative to the business of the church, or to the interests of religion, and to have it put to vote: provided only, that his motion be seconded by another Member. If any Member conceive his privilege to be unjustly controuled by the Moderator, he may appeal to the Judicatory, who

shall determine the point of privilege by a vote: and the Moderator and Member must submit to the suffrage of the Judicatory.

C H A P. X X.

Of Clerks.

Every Judicatory shall choose a Clerk, to record their transactions, whose continuance shall be during pleasure. It shall be the duty of the Clerk, besides recording the transactions, to preserve them carefully; and to grant extracts from them, whenever properly required; and such extracts, under the hand of the Clerk, shall be considered as authentic vouchers, of the fact which they declare, in any ecclesiastical Judicatory, and to every part of the church.

C H A P. X X I.

Of vacant Congregations assembling for public Worship.

Considering the great importance of weekly assembling the people, for the public worship of God; in order thereby to improve their knowledge; to confirm their habits of worship, and their desire of the public ordinances; to augment their reverence for the most high God; and to promote the charitable affections which unite men most firmly in society: It is recommended, that every vacant congregation meet together, on the Lord's day, at one or more places, for the purpose of prayer, singing praises, and reading the holy Scriptures, together with the works of such approved Divines, as the Presbytery, within whose bounds they are, may recommend, and they may be able to procure; and that the Elders or Deacons be the persons who shall preside, and select the portions of Scripture, and of the other books, to be read; and to see that the whole be conducted in a becoming and orderly manner.

C H A P. X X I I.

Of Commissioners to the General Assembly.

SECT. I. The Commissioners to the General Assembly shall always be appointed, by the Presbytery from which they come, at its last stated meeting immediately preceding the meeting of the General Assembly; provided, that there be a sufficient interval, between that time and the meeting of the Assembly, for the Commissioners to attend their duty in due season; otherwise, the Presbytery may make the appointment at any stated meeting, not more than seven months preceding the meeting of the Assembly. And as much as possible to prevent all failure in the representation of the Presbyteries, arising from unforeseen accidents to those first appointed, it may be expedient for each Presbytery, in the room of each Commissioner, to appoint also an alternate Commissioner, to supply his place, in case of necessary absence.

Commissioners shall be appointed at last stated meeting of the Presbytery.

SECT. II. Each Commissioner, before his name shall be enrolled as a Member of the Assembly, shall produce, from his Presbytery, a commission under the hand of the Moderator and Clerk, in the following or like form:

Form of a Commission.

viz.

“The Presbytery of _____ being met at _____ on the _____ day of _____ doth hereby appoint _____ Bishop of the congregation of _____ [or _____ ruling Elder in the congregation of _____ as the case may be;]” (to which the Presbytery may, if they think proper, make a substitution in the following form, “or in case of his absence, then

_____ Bishop of the congregation of _____ [or _____ ruling Elder in the congregation of _____ as the case may be;]”) to be a Commissioner, on behalf of this Presbytery, to the next General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America, to meet at _____ on the _____ day of _____ A.D. _____ or wherever, and whenever the said Assembly may happen to fit; to consult, vote, and determine, on all things that may come before that body, according to the principles and constitutions of this church, and the Word of God. And of his diligence herein, he is to render an account at his return.

Signed, by Order of the Presbytery,
Moderator
Clerk.”

And the Presbytery shall make record of the appointment.

SECT. III. These commissions shall, if possible, be delivered to the Clerk of the Assembly, in proper season, that he may have the roll of the Assembly completed before the first session. Commissions, not produced at the beginning of the Assembly, shall afterwards be delivered only in the intervals between the sessions. No Commissioner shall have a right to deliberate or vote in the Assembly; until his name shall have been enrolled by the Clerk, and his commission publicly read, and filed among the papers of the Assembly.

Commissions shall be delivered to the Clerk at the first Session.

SECT. IV. The General Assembly shall meet, at least, once in every year, their first meeting to be on the third Thursday of May, 1789, in the second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and afterwards on their own adjournments. If there be not a sufficient number, for the transaction of business, convened before 12 o'clock, on that day, those who are present shall have power to adjourn, from day to day, till a sufficient number shall have met to constitute an Assembly.

The Assembly shall meet once a year.

SECT. V. On the day, to which the General Assembly stands adjourned, and between the hours of eleven and twelve, the Moderator of the last General Assembly, if present; or, in case of his absence, the senior Minister present, shall open the meeting with a sermon. After sermon, the Members being in the house where the Assembly is to hold its sessions, the same Minister who preached shall, by prayer, publicly implore the blessing and direction of Almighty God; and shall continue to preside till a new Moderator be chosen. For this purpose he shall call for the commissions of those present; which being read, and the names of the Members, enrolled in order, if there be a quorum, they shall chose a Moderator.

And shall be opened with a sermon.

SECT. VI. Each session of the Assembly, as of all the other Judicatories of the church, shall be introduced and concluded with prayer. And the whole business of the Assembly being finished, and the vote being taken for dissolving the

Mode of dissolving the Assembly.

present Assembly, the Moderator shall say from the chair: “By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the church, let this General Assembly be dissolved; and I do hereby dissolve it, and require another Assembly chosen in the same manner, to meet at on the day of A.D. .”

After which he shall pray, and return thanks to God for his great mercy and Goodness, and pronounce, on those present, the apostolic benediction.

SECT. VII. In order, as far as possible, to procure a respectable and full delegation to all our Judicatories, it is proper, that the expences of Ministers and Elders, in their attendance on these Judicatories, be defrayed, by the bodies which they respectively represent.

Expences of
Delegates to be
defrayed.

F O R M S of P R O C E S S IN THE J U D I C A T O R I E S OF THIS C H U R C H.

C H A P. I.

With regard to SCANDALS, or OFFENCES that may arise in our Churches, we agree to observe the following rules of proceeding.

1. Inasmuch as all baptized persons are Members of the Church, they are under its care; and subject to its government and discipline: and, when they have arrived at the years of discretion they are bound to perform all the duties of Church members.

2. No accusation shall be admitted, as the foundation of a process before an ecclesiastical Judicatory, but where such offences are alledged, as appear, from the Word of God, to merit the public notice and censure of the Church. And, in the accusation, the times, places, and circumstances, should be ascertained, if possible; that the accused may have an opportunity to prove an *alibi*; or to extenuate, or alleviate his crime.

3. No complaint or information, on the subject of personal and private injuries, shall be admitted; unless those means of

reconciliation, and of privately reclaiming the offender, have been used, which are required by Christ, Mat. XVIII. 15.16. And, in all cases, the ecclesiastical Judicatories, in receiving accusations, in conducting processes, or inflicting censures, ought to avoid, as far as possible, the divulging of offences, to the scandal of the Church: because the unnecessary spreading of scandal hardens and enrages the guilty, grieves the godly, and dishonours religion. And if any private Christian shall industriously spread the knowledge of an offence, unless in prosecuting it before the proper Judicatories of the Church, he shall be liable to censure, as an uncandid slanderer of his brother.

4. When complaint is made of a crime, cognizable before any Judicatory, no more shall be done at the first meeting, unless by consent of parties, than to give the accused a copy of each charge with the names of the witnesses to support it; and a citation of all concerned, to appear at the next meeting of the Judicatory, to have the matter fully heard and decided. Notice shall be given to the parties concerned, at least ten days, previously to the meeting of the Judicatory.

5. The Judicatory, in many cases, may find it more for edification, to send some Members to converse, in a private manner, with the accused person; and, if he confess guilt, to endeavour to bring him to repentance; than to proceed immediately to citation.

6. When an accused person, or a witness, refuses to obey the citation, he shall be cited a second, and a third time; and if he still continue to refuse, he shall be excluded from the communion of the Church, for his contumacy; until he repent.

7. No crime shall be considered as established by a single witness.

8. The oath, or affirmation, to be taken by a witness, shall be administered by the moderator, and shall be in the following, or like terms: "I solemnly promise, in the presence of the omniscient and heart-searching God, that I will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; according to the best of my knowledge, in the matter in which I am called to witness, as I shall answer it to the great Judge of quick and dead."

9. The trial shall be open, fair, and impartial. The witnesses shall be examined in the presence of the accused; or at least after he shall have received due citation to attend: and he shall be permitted to ask any questions tending to his own exculpation.

10. No witness afterwards to be examined, shall be present, during the examination of another witness, on the same cause.

11. The testimony, given by witnesses, must be faithfully recorded; and read to them, for the approbation or subscription.

12. The judgment shall be regularly entered on the records of the Judicatory: and the parties shall be allowed copies of the whole proceedings, if they demand them. And, in case of references, or appeals, the Judicatory appealed from shall send authentic copies of the whole process to the higher Judicatories.

13. The person found guilty shall be admonished, or rebuked, or excluded from Church privileges, as the case shall appear to deserve; and this only till he give satisfactory evidence of repentance.

14. The sentence shall be published, only in the Church or Churches which have been offended. Or, if it be a matter of small importance, and it shall appear most for edification not to publish it, it may pass only in the Judicatory.

15. Such gross offenders, as will not be reclaimed by the private or public admonitions of the Church, are to be cut off from its communion, agreeably to our Lord's direction, Mat. XVIII. 17. and the Apostolic injunction respecting the incestuous person, I Cor. V. 1-5. But as this is the highest censure of the Church, and of the most solemn nature; it is not to be inflicted, without the advice and consent of, at least, the Presbytery under whose care the particular Church is, to which the offender belongs; or the advice of a higher Judicatory, as the case may appear to require.

16. All processes, in cases of scandal shall commence, within the space of one year, after the crime shall have been committed; unless it shall have become recently flagrant.

17. When any Member shall remove from one Congregation to another, he shall produce proper testimonials of his Church-membership, before he be admitted to Church-privileges; unless the Church, to which he removes, has other satisfactory means of information.

C H A P. I I.

Of Process against a Bishop or Minister.

As the success of the Gospel, in a great measure, depends upon the credit and good report of its Ministers, each Presbytery ought, with the greatest attention, to watch over all their Members; and to be

careful to censure them, when necessary, with impartiality; either for personal crimes, which they may commit in common with other men; or those that are vocational, arising from the manner in which they may discharge their important office.

1. Process, against a Gospel Minister, shall always be entered before the Presbytery of which he is a member. And, in case it shall be found that the facts with which he shall be charged happened without the bounds of his own Presbytery, they shall send notice to the Presbytery within whose bounds they did happen: and desire that Presbytery, either (if within convenient distance) to cite the witnesses to appear at the place where the trial began. Or, if otherwise, to take the examination themselves: and transmit an authentic record of their testimony. Always giving due notice to the accused person at the time and place of such examination.

2. Nevertheless, in case of a Minister being supposed to be guilty of any crime, or crimes, at such a distance from his usual place of residence, as that the offence is not likely to become otherwise known to the Presbytery to which he belongs; it shall, in such case, be the duty of the Presbytery within whose bounds the facts shall have happened, after satisfying themselves that there is a probable ground of accusation, to send notice to the Presbytery of which he is a member; who are to proceed against him; and to take the proof by Commission, as above directed.

3. Process, against a Gospel Minister, shall not be entered upon; unless some person, or persons, undertake to make out the charge; or when common sense so loudly proclaims the scandal, that the Presbytery find it necessary to prosecute, and search into the matter, for the honour of religion.

4. As the success of the Gospel greatly depends on the unblemished character of its Ministers; their soundness in the Faith, and holy, and exemplary conversation: and as it is the duty of all Christians to be very cautious in taking up an ill report of any man, it is especially so of a Minister of the Gospel. If, therefore, any man know a Minister guilty of a private censurable fault, he should warn him in private. But if he persist in it; or it become public; he should apply, to some other Bishop of the Presbytery, for his advice in the matter.

5. When complaint is laid before the Presbytery, it must be reduced to writing; and nothing farther is to be done at the first meeting, unless by consent of parties, than giving the minister a full copy of the charges, with the names of the witnesses annexed

thereto: and citing all parties, and their witnesses, to appear and be heard at the next meeting: which meeting shall not be sooner than ten days after such citation.

6. At the next meeting of the Presbytery, the charges must be read to him, and his answers heard. If it appear necessary to proceed farther, the Presbytery ought to labour to bring him to confession. And if he confess, and the matter be base and flagitious; such as drunkenness, uncleanness, or crimes of a higher nature; however penitent he may appear, to the satisfaction of all, the Presbytery must, without delay, suspend him from the exercise of his office; or depose him from the ministry; and appoint him a due time to confess publicly before the Congregation offended; and to profess his repentance.

7. The prosecutor shall be previously warned, that, if he fail to prove the charges, he must himself be censured, as a slanderer of the Gospel ministry; in proportion to the malignity, or rashness, that shall appear in the prosecution.

8. If a Minister, accused of atrocious crimes, being three times duly cited, shall refuse to attend the Presbytery, he must be immediately suspended. And if, after another citation, he still refuse to attend, he shall be deposed as contumacious.

9. If the Minister, when he appears, will not confess; but denies the facts alledged against him: if, on hearing the witness, the charges appear important and well supported, the Presbytery must, nevertheless, censure him; and suspend or depose him; according to the nature of the offence.

10. Heresy and schism may be of such a nature as to infer deposition: but errors ought to be carefully considered; whether they strike at the vitals of religion, and are industriously spread; or whether they arise from the weakness of the human understanding; and are not likely to do much hurt.

11. A Minister, under process for heresy or schism, should be treated with Christian and brotherly tenderness. Frequent conferences ought to be held with him, and proper admonitions administered. Yet, for some more dangerous errors, suspension becomes necessary. But a Synod should be consulted in such cases.

12. If the Presbytery find, on trial, that the matter complained of amounts to no more than such acts of infirmity, as may be amended and the People satisfied; so as little or nothing remains to hinder his usefulness; they shall take all prudent measures to remove the offence.

13. A Minister, deposed for scandalous conduct, may not be restored; even on his deepest sorrow for sin; without some time of eminent and exemplary, humble and edifying conversation, to heal the wound made by his scandal.

14. As soon as a Minister is deposed, his congregation shall be declared vacant.