

**THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF
THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA**

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The Form of Government and the Discipline of the United Presbyterian Church of North America by Various

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VARIOUS

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United Presbyterian Church
OF
NORTH AMERICA.

PHILADELPHIA:
WM. S. YOUNG—1023 RACE STREET.
1860.

EXTRACT

FROM THE MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MET IN PHILADEL-
PHIA, MAY 23D, 1860.

Resolved, That the Book of Discipline submitted by the Committee appointed by the last Assembly, and which has been under the consideration of this Assembly, be overtured to the Presbyteries for their consideration, and that they be instructed to report their judgment thereon to the next General Assembly.

JOSEPH CLOKEY, *Moderator*.

JAMES PRESTLEY, *Prin. Clerk*.

OF GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

SECTION 1. "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship." It is, therefore, an inalienable right common to all men, to worship God according to his word: and no earthly power can justly deprive them of the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, unless its exercise infringes upon the rights of others.

2. In harmony with the above principle of common right, we affirm, that every Christian church, or association of particular churches, has an unquestionable right to settle and declare the terms of admission into

its fellowship, the qualifications of its ministers and members, and the whole system of its internal polity and government, according to its own views of what Christ hath in these respects appointed. In doing this she may err, in the sight of the church's Head, to whom alone she is accountable, yet does not thereby infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others.

3. The Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice, and whatever cannot be established from this word, can have no authority to bind the conscience. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." All the terms of the church's fellowship must then be drawn from the written word, and be such as can be defended by an appeal to its authority, either express or necessarily inferential.

4. The terms of the church's fellowship should include both faith and practice. An unscriptural belief as really sets the authority of God's word at defiance as an unholy practice. The tendency of the truth is to promote holiness; as our Saviour says, "Sanctify them through thy truth." The church should, therefore, take order that her teachers, other officers and members, be sound in the faith and holy in their lives.

5. Although the authority to judge, as ne-

cessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men, yet being the ministerial exercise of Christ's own authority, it should be submitted to, as far as it is exercised according to the law of his house, laid down in the holy Scriptures. "He that heareth you heareth me." "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

6. As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and the discipline of his house is purely moral or spiritual, not attended with any civil or penal effects on the bodies or estates of men, but designed to reach their consciences, its efficacy must depend on its own justice, and the approbation and blessing of the great Head of the Church.

7. That all things may "be done to edifying," and "decently and in order," it is the right and duty of the church to establish and ordain such forms and rules of procedure, as prudence and experience may show to be necessary, for the speedy and orderly transaction of all business in her various assemblies.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE CHURCH.

SECTION 1. There is one universal, visible church, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, which consists of all those persons, in every nation, who profess the true religion of Christ, and obedience to his laws, together with their children. Rev. v. 9; Acts ii. 38, 39, 41; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Cor. ix. 13.

2. This church is Christ's kingdom in the world. Psal. ii. 6; Dan. vii. 14; Eph. i. 22, 23. It is spiritual, free and independent, subject only to his law, and to be governed exclusively by officers of his appointment.

3. As the whole multitude constituting the visible church cannot meet in one place, it is reasonable, and warranted by Scripture example, that they should be divided into many particular churches or congregations. Gal. i. 21, 22; Rev. i. 4, 20; ii. 1.

4. A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their children, voluntarily associated together, for the purpose of observing and enjoying divine ordinances, and submitting themselves to the laws of Christ's house. Acts ii. 41, 47; 1 Cor. vii. 14; Acts ii. 39; Mark x. 14.

5. The Lord Jesus has appointed officers, ordinances and a government in his church.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.

ARTICLE I.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF OFFICERS.

SECTION 1. At the first establishment of the New Testament Church, our Lord appointed some extraordinary officers, such as apostles and prophets, endued with miraculous gifts, all of which were temporary, and have ceased. Matt. x. 1, 8; Eph. iv. 11.

2. The ordinary and perpetual officers of the church, are Bishops or Presbyters, 1 Tim. iii. 1; Eph. iv. 11, 12, ruling elders, 1 Tim. v. 17, and deacons. Phil. i. 1.

ARTICLE II.

OF BISHOPS OR PASTORS.

The pastor or teaching elder is the highest ordinary officer in the Christian Church. Various names are given to him in Scripture, each expressive of something conspicuous in his official relations and duties. Thus, he is called the "angel of the church," Rev. ii. 1; i. 20; iii. 1, 7; Mal. ii. 7; "bishop" or "overseer," Acts xx. 28; "pastor," Jer. iii. 15; 1 Pet. v. 2, 3, 4; "minister," 1 Cor. iv. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 6; "presbyter" or "elder," 1 Pet. v. 1; Tit. i. 5; 1 Tim. v. 1, 17, 19; an ambassador. 2 Cor. v. 20; Eph. vi. 20.