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I. SOME PERILS OF MISSIONARY LIFE.¹

I suppose we all recognize that missionaries are the cream of Christians. They may say with Paul, in the whole length and breadth of his meaning, that unto them the grace has been given to preach unto the heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. iii., 8). They are the bold and faithful spirits who bear the banner of the cross courageously to the front. We who abide at home, hope that we are at home by the will of God and to his glory; but we cannot withhold our admiration from those whom God has chosen to form the advance-guard of his conquering host. We recognize that these "picked men" are the *elite* of the army of the cross. Their bearing justifies this recognition. There is no body of men in the world of equal numbers who so thoroughly meet the trust reposed in them and the lofty sentiments entertained towards them by their fellow Christians.

So exalted is our well-founded appreciation of the character of missionaries in general that it comes with something of a shock to us to discover, as we are now and then led to discover, that even missionaries are, nevertheless, men, and are sometimes liable to the temptations, and shall

¹An address to a body of prospective missionaries.

VII. THE FIRST PRESBYTERY.

I. The first Presbytery which met in America convened in the early part of the year 1705, in the village of Philadelphia, in the colony of William Penn. It is true that four years before this date William Penn had dignified the settlement with the title of city, at which time its population all told, would not number as many people as ordinarily congregate at this day in a frontier village to attend a popular circus. The reader will understand that the craze for calling every railroad crossing and every cross-road settlement a city is not a modern craze. All our boasted civilization and modern progress has made but little advance along this line. The quaint and dignified old Quaker with his religious sanctity and court intrigues, moved the previous question on modern civilization, and in 1701, before there were any railroads, signed a charter and made his little settlement on the Delaware river at the mouth of the Schuylskill, a city. Nevertheless, it was a village of log houses and shanties squatted in the fork of the two rivers and barely reaching down to the water's edge of either. In this village and in a "log meeting house" the first court of the Presbyterian Church in America opened up business for the spread of the Gospel and the evangelization of the new world along the line of the Scripture form of Church government, which is that of Presbytery.

This Presbytery had no legal standing, no distinctive or descriptive title, no corporate life, although it claimed to have a constitution, which was never printed, or if so, no copy has ever come down to us. It was simply a Presbytery. It met annually in the city of Philadelphia till the organization of a Synod, with the exception of two meetings, which were held in New Castle. The exact date 1705

is a presumption. But it goes without contradiction, and is strengthened by the fact that the first accessible records upon which the presumption is based, bear date 1706, with strong indication of and allusions to, a previous meeting, which had assigned certain parts of trial to a candidate for the ministry. The first and second pages, missing the third page, open: "*De regimine ecclesiæ*—which being heard, was approved of and continued." The record proceeds: "He gave in also his *theis* to be considered of against the next *sederunt*." The next *sederunt*, 2d, 10brs. 27. "*Post preces sederunt*, Mr. Francis McKemie Moderator, Messrs. Jedediah Andrews and John Hampton ministers." The latin quotations here are literal as they stand in the records, and may without any breach of propriety be pronounced as the fathers pronounced them, after the English method, by which the reader will be able to trace the signification by the sound of the words and understand that *sederunt* of the primitave American Presbytery corresponds to the sittings of the Presbytery of modern times.

"Mr. John Boyd performed the other parts of his trial, viz: preached a popular sermon on John 1: 12, defended his thesis, gave satisfaction as to his skill in the languages and answered to extemporary questions, all of which were approved of and sustained." It was further "appointed that his ordination be on the next Lord's day, the 29th, which was accordingly performed in the public meeting house of this place before a numerous assembly. The next day he had a certificate of ordination."

From these records it appears that Mr. John Boyd was the first minister licensed and ordained by the Presbyterian Church in America. His licensure and ordination took place at the same meeting of Presbytery. But it was no hurried up affair. No extraordinary case. His examination appears to have been thorough, full and exact. Mr. Boyd was assigned to service on several committees, and to "supply Woodbridge every third Sabbath if the people

desired it." He was finally settled in Freehold, N. J. The records of the year 1709 have this entry: "The Rev. Mr. Boyd being dead, what relates to him ceases." This is the first death mentioned in the record. There is no memorial page set apart; no committee appointed to draft and bring in a minute—just simply one entry, terse and significant as any we find in the Old Testament concerning the patriarchs. There is no mention in the records concerning the death of Rev. Francis Makemie, the first moderator. But in a letter addressed by the Presbytery, in May 1709, to Sir Edward Harrison, at London, we read: "The negotiations begun and encouraged by a friend in the time when our worthy friend, Mr. Makemie, (now deceased) was with you for evangelizing these colonies was a beginning exceedingly acceptable to a multitude of people, and was likely to be of great service if continued, which makes us much grieved that so valuable a design was so soon after its beginning laid aside." The point of the "much grieved" here is not that Mr. Makemie is "now deceased," but that the enterprise of evangelizing the colonies was so soon cut off.

The youngest, first licensed, first ordained is "dead." The oldest first moderator, most able, distinguished and efficient is "deceased," and the mention of the last fact placed in brackets.

Although but three names appear on the pages of the records as present at the first recorded meeting, their number very soon increased to seven, as appears from the sixth page of the "Preliminary Sketch" of the Presbyterian Church, published by the board of publication in 1841. Their names are Francis Makemie, John Hampton, George McNish and Samuel Davis. These were all emigrated from Ireland and exercised their ministerial gifts on the Eastern shore of Maryland. In addition to these Nathaniel Taylor, a Scotchman, settled in Marlborough; John Wilson, likewise a Scotchman, settled in New Castle; and Mr. Jeddiah Andrews, a Boston Yankee, settled in Philadelphia, completed the seven.

The same dissatisfaction which prevails to-day about church conveniences and the multiplicity of preaching places cropped out very early in the history of Presbyterianism in America. To-day almost every little town which is incorporated into a city with charter privileges, has those in it who want to divide that element, which might if properly managed, make one strong Presbyterian Church, into two or three feeble bands calling themselves by pompous titles. They go begging all through the community for money to help them on in their disintegrating work—starving out two or three good preachers by their divisive actions when by combined effort they might give one man a decent support and make themselves felt a power for good in the community. Before this Presbytery had held its third meeting two counter petitions came before the body. The record runs after this fashion: "This day was read before the Presbytery a letter sent by the people of and about White Clay Creek, in New Castle County, importing their desire and petition to the Presbytery to have the ordinances of the gospel administered with more convenience and nearness to the place of their abode for the greater advantage and ease to their several families, promising with all due encouragement the minister that shall be thus appointed to supply them." Over against this on the same page and the same day we read, "This day was also read a letter from several persons in the town of New Castle wherein they crave that the people of White Clay Creek may not be suffered to set up a meeting house in the country, that their meeting house and congregation in New Castle may not be damaged by this rupture of their fellow members of White Clay Creek." After due deliberation the Presbytery took the following action: "Ordered that the people of New Castle and the country shall not be divided by setting up two separate meetings." This action was preeminently wise, and the wording is perfect—it is inhibitory, the right of rule and

authority is asserted. The Presbytery exercised that Episcopal function which belongs to and is inherent in the body. The end for which the action was taken is clearly set out: "Shall not be divided." That is generally the effect produced, it divides the Presbyterian Church in any and every community where it is attempted, however loud the protestations may be to the contrary. Any one who has ever been on the ground knows that the distance between White Clay Creek and New Castle is so short that an active and energetic boy could, in the summer time, have left home after an early breakfast, on Sunday morning, gone down to the creek, with good tackle and the right sort of bait, and caught a fine mess of fish and got back home before his mother could have returned from the meeting house where she had gone to hear Mr. John Wilson preach his sermons by order of Presbytery. Or that same mother could have sat on her front porch, any quiet summer evening during the week, and heard distinctly the deep bass notes of the green-headed bull frogs which in those days infested the waters of White Clay Creek. Still at that early day with bad roads and inconvenience of travel, and many other considerations there might have been found some plausible excuse for wanting two meeting houses in sight and sound of each other. But in this day with all sorts of conveyance from the "fly" to the "trap" or the "spider" and the "drag" for fashionable Christians, with the street cars for those in more modern circumstances, bicycles for the young folks and stick horses for the children, there is absolutely no real and necessary demand for dividing the congregations by setting up separate meeting houses in so many of our large towns and smaller cities.

Our Presbyteries should follow the policy thus laid down by our fathers and assert their authority in unifying the strength of the church and consolidating its forces. No movement in any town or city should be encouraged, much less aided by the "committee of Home Missions," until it can be shown that a church is strong enough numerically and

financially to support itself, and also aid the out-going colony with substantial help. Then let them multiply as fast as these conditions will justify the multiplication, but not any faster. Otherwise the cause is injured, notwithstanding the talk about a mission in every ward, and a little church in every bailiwick. The real need and most pressing demand of to-day is for the grouping of weak churches in the smaller towns and country places and putting one minister over a number of them, that all may have the benefits of the gospel ordinances once a month, or oftener. Or, sending the man who wants to plant churches to the frontier and destitute parts where there is no preaching at all, and thus build for God and the church.

"The Home Mission Committee" should not be asked, by any Presbytery, to take the money given by the church for "Home Missions" to start, or maintain, any and every feeble little effort which may be attempted in towns or small cities where already the means of grace are found in a church organized and a pastor settled. It is the part of wisdom and prudence, as well as a duty, to take care of the country churches and destitute places. And when we remember that the larger cities are drawing from the country to keep up, and increase, their growing and business population we can readily understand that the most economical and best use which can be made of the men and the money is to put both in the smaller towns where we have no churches, and from which our cities are making constant drafts.

Another matter arrested the attention of this first Presbytery and received that prompt action which should characterize every church court under similar circumstances. Upon information that David Evan, a lay person, had taken upon himself to publicly teach or preach among the Welch settlements, in what was then called the "Great Valley," in Chester county, the Presbytery proceeded to take up the matter and issue it in the following words: "It was unanimously agreed that the said David Evan had done very ill

and irregularly in thus invading the work of the ministry, and was thereupon censured." The record does not show whether Mr. David Evan had been teaching a singing school, and being popular with the young ladies and their mothers, was thus fitted for and called to the independent work of the ministry. Nor does it carry any recorded evidence that he was a commercial traveler, and knew the ways of the traveling men, and boys about town, and had that special qualification and call to the ministry, or that he was a reformed gambler and drunkard, and for that reason the very man of all others for the place. The presumption is rather the other way, for there is no evidence that Mr. Evan became obstreperous and sneered at the authority of the courts of the Lord's house, and rushed frantically into the ministry as a great lay evangelist. Nor did he tramp about over the country with a little reed organ and a dapper little side-whiskered singer, invading the churches and forcing pastors to tolerate and approve him and his methods under an implied threat that if they offered any opposition he would get a rickety old tent, or rent a dingy old hall, and begin at once dividing their congregations and unsettling their pastorates.

Having unanimously agreed that Mr. Evan had done "very ill," and further having "censured him" for doing so, it was finally "Agreed, that the most proper method of advancing David Evan in necessary literature to prepare him for the work of the ministry, is that he lay aside all other business for twelve months and apply himself closely to learning and study, under the direction of Mr. Andrews, with the assistance of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Anderson, and that it be left to the discretion of these said ministers when to put Mr. Evan on trial and license him publicly to teach or preach." Here is the first instance on record of the Presbyterian Church in America appointing a commission with authority to license a candidate to preach. This commission consisted of three ministers but no ruling. Here is the first instance of the

Presbyterian Church in America recommending that a candidate for the ministry study for a given period of time "under some approved divine." Both of these principles had since been embodied in the organic law of our church. To all of the action the people of the "Great Valley" and Mr. David Evan submitted themselves in the fear of the Lord, feeling that the Presbytery had the authority to act in the premises. In the subsequent record we read: "A unanimous call from the people of West Tract to Mr. David Evan being presented to us and approved, we offered it to him which he accepted, whereupon it was appointed as follows, viz.: Messrs. Jeddiah Andrews, Jones, Anderson, Gillispie and Wortherspoon solemnly ordain him to the work and office of the ministry after having been satisfied with his ministerial abilities in any pieces of trial they should think fit to appoint him." There was no ruling elder there. The high estimate set by these fathers upon the value and efficiency of the Church courts may be more clearly seen and better understood by a few extracts from the records:

"Ordered that no members of this Presbytery upon any whatsoever pretence, do depart or leave the Presbytery without the meeting be broke up, or at least leave be asked and had from the Presbytery." (Page 16.) Again: "This day a letter by Mr. Samuel Davis was presented to them, it being moved by one of the members that the letter might be read it was accordingly read, and Mr. Davis his reasons for excusing his absence from this and the preceeding meeting were *not* sustained by the Presbytery." The "not" was italized. It was further "Ordered, that a letter be written and sent to Mr. Samuel Davis, in the name of the Presbytery, by Master John Watson, requiring him to be present at our next meeting in this place." (Page 1.) In the case of Mr. Hehry: "His letter to excuse his not coming to Presbytery read, and his excuse sustained. *Ordered*, that the Moderator write to him and signify that his excuse was

sustained with difficulty." (Records, page 21.) "In the case of Mr. Morgan and Mr. Van Vleck, who were absent and no excuse given or sent: Ordered, that Mr. Andrews write to them and *reprehend* them for their absence." (Records, page 21.) There was little disposition to accept any excuse or sustain any reason offered by any delinquent. "Mr. Andrews was defective in not delivering his Presbyterial exercise and was censured for his defect and appointed to deliver it next meeting." (Records, page 22.) "Mr. George McNish not having his Presbyterial exercise ready and excusing himself on account of sickness for a month past was blamed for not preparing it sooner, and ordered to prepare and deliver it by the next Presbytery." Records, page 32.) "Mr. Evan's absence from Mr. Con's ordination was ill taken by the Presbytery." (Record, page 44.) Mr. Robert Wortherspoon having been appointed to prepare a Presbyterial exercise, and not having complied, it was ordered "that the Moderator should Presbyterially admonishing him to be more careful for time coming, which was accordingly done." (Record, page 44.)

This Presbytery early established a rule for defraying the expenses of representatives to the meetings of the same, which principle has since been embodied in the organic law of our Church. "Mr. Henry, representative of the congregation, being absent, and his reason for not coming being inquired into, he said the present condition of his people made it necessary that there should be a particular collection made by the congregation for defraying the charges of the representative to the Presbytery and it was allowed that there should." This became the rule in the subsequent meeting of Presbytery.

The question of settled pastors and the payment of the salary promised, received the attention of the Presbytery as will be indicated by some facts in the record. The people of Snow Hill sent their representative to Presbytery asking the permission and concurrence of that body in presenting

a call to Mr. John Hampton to become their pastor which was agreed to and Mr. Hampton was settled as their proper and permanent minister and pastor. At a subsequent meeting of Presbytery we find this significant entry: "Ordered by Presbytery that there be a letter sent to the people of Snow Hill requiring their faithful care in collecting the tobacco promised by subscription to Mr. Hampton." (Records, page 11.) Another entry during that same session of Presbytery reads in these words: "Ordered that Mr. Taylor write to the people of Monikin and Wycomico exciting them to the duty to pay what they promise to Mr. McNish." (Records, page 13.) At a subsequent meeting of Presbytery the following action was had: "Ordered that the ministers and elders come prepared for the future to give a true and impartial account how matters are mutually betwix them both in regard to spirituals and temporals." (Records, page 18.) Four years after this it was enacted by Presbytery that "For the better establishment and settling of congregations it was ordered and appointed that in every congregation there be a sufficient number of assistants chosen to aid the minister in the management of congregational affairs and that there be a book of records to this effect and that the same be annually brought here to be revised by the Presbytery." (Records, page 37.) Just what particular status these "assistants" occupied in relation to the elders and deacons is not known, for in that particular the records do not say. And whether that "book" was sent up as a part of the session is not known. Sometime before this action was taken we find that, "Inquiry was made of the several ministers touching the state of their congregation and of themselves with relation thereto; and also of the several elders not only of the measures taken to support the ministry but of the life, conversation and doctrine of their several ministers, and report was given to satisfaction for this time." (Records, page 22.) This evidently corresponded to what is now called, in many

of our Presbyteries, a free conversation on the state of religion within their bounds. It was also, "Agreed that none should be allowed to vote for the calling of a minister but those that shall contribute for the maintainance of him and that the major vote of those shall be determinative." (Records, page 24.)

II. Two cases of discipline engaged the attention of the fathers of this first Presbytery. The one pertained to the church at Woodbridge, the early beginning of which appears to be wrapped in considerable mystery for the records are not clear on that particular point. Indications point to the fact that four congregational ministers in Connecticut, viz., Davenport, Webb, Shove and Buckenham, co-operating with Dr. Cotton Mather, of Boston, had been instrumental, through the agency of Jediah Anfrews, in settling over the people in Woodbridge a Rev. Nathiel Wade, himself perhaps from Boston. Whether there was any suspicion of Mr. Wade on applying to Presbytery for admission, or whether it was that rigid supervision which the Presbytery felt itself called upon to exercise in all matters, we cannot tell. But from the time of the application of Mr. Wade for his reception there appears to have been an apprehension that all would not go well. We read, "The Rev. Mr. Nathiel Wade made application to the Presbytery to be admitted a member thereof, upon which we deliberately debated and made a narrow scrutiny into matters as they appeared to us, and found by his certificate that his ordination was good and valid according to Scripture rules, and also a call and subscription even from some of yourselves (Woodbridge Church) with several other recommendations from persons whose integrity we could not suspect. And nothing appearing to his disadvantage, sufficiently attested, we judge it unjust to deny his desire which seemed to us to flow from sincere intentions of being more useful and doing greater good, he having freely and fully submitted himself to the judgment and discipline of

the Church, according to Presbytery." But Mr. Wade appears to have been one of those impulsive individuals whose emotional nature, governed almost entirely by the circumstances surrounding him, frequently got the better of his judgment. So his statements at different times, and sundry places, contradicted each other, and the actual facts in the case, by a big majority. When Mr. Wade was at the meeting of Presbytery he was a Presbyterian, "and with tears in his eyes and uplifted hand," declared himself ready to abide the action of Presbytery and "submitted himself willingly to its constitution," saying, "that he by the consent of the Presbytery would cheerfully demit and resign up all pastoral relation to the whole people of Woodbridge." But on returning home from Presbytery there was a reaction and he again became a Congregationalist, and told "the people, with ostentation, that he was more firmly fixed than he was ever before" in his pastoral relation, which Presbytery had dissolved. This action upon his part the fathers of this first Presbytery called "fallaciously and falsely pretending." When Mr. Wade thus kicked out of the traces, and began to buck in good fashion style against Presbyterial power and influence, the Presbytery stripped off his ministerial harness, divested him of his pastoral relation, and hastened to write a letter to Dr. Cotton Mather notifying him of what they had done, and asking that he use his influence in quieting the disturbance between this obstreperous divine and the good people of Woodbridge.

Coming from a less grave and dignified body, this letter might be construed as sarcastic irony. For they stated in very plain terms that they were aware of the fact that Mr. Wade had recently been to Boston consulting with Dr. Cotton Mather, and had returned with a letter giving encouragement to the divisive element. We have no information as to whether this ancient and eminent mind-reader and interpreter of satanic purposes in the brains of foolish and

superstitious old women, and silly and credulous young girls ever responded to this letter, or exerted himself, to any great extent, to passify matters in this triangler conflict. But we have a shrend suspicion that if the old fellow had delivered himself it would have been to the effect that all parties had been "bewitched" by Satan in his "most nefarious" efforts to prevent the planting of congregational principles in the courts of the Presbyterian Church.

The other case of discipline was that of the Rev. Paulus Van Vleck, a Holland Dutchman, well up on the doctrines of the Synod of Dort, and sound on the Heidleburg Catechism. The charge against him, therefore, was not that of heresy in doctrine or insubordination to the Presbytery in the matter of government. It was a charge of immorality in life and conduct. The Rev. Paulus Van Vleck was suspected of having two living wives at one and the same time—one spouse left behind him in Holland, and one, as a living reality and present witness, here in America. The charge was at first that of bigamy, to which was afterward added that "of lying also." As the investigation proceeded a suspicion arose and grew that the Rev. Paulus Van Vleck had "committed some forgeries." In this way "common fame" volunteered her services to the prosecution, and helped on with the conviction. Her specification under the general indictment was, "that there was a letter at New York from the said Mr. Van Vleck's mother that contradicted those which he had produced."

Mr. Van Vleck was somewhat handicapped from the very start, for the issue was not joined upon the common law principle, that if not proven guilty, the accused must go free, but rather upon the condition, that, one side or the other had to make out the case, and if the prosecution could not prove guilt, the accused must be able to establish his innocence. And such was the verdict in this grave matter of bigamy, falsehood and forgery. The case was first brought to the attention of Presbytery when the character of its

ministers and people, was being looked into, the Presbytery having established "The order for inquiring into the mutual condition of ministers and people." The cause pending, it was concluded that, "After the Presbytery had examined the several evidences brought in relation to the crime of bigamy, alleged against Mr. Paulus Van Vleck, as also the exceptions offered by the said Van Vleck against the evidence and in vindication of himself, the Presbytery not finding the evidence clear and positive enough to prove the crime against him, and yet Mr. Van Vleck's vindication not sufficient to take off the scandal wholly, do therefore, till such time as Rev. Van Vleck brings satisfactory proof of his first wife's death, for the honor of the gospel, advise that he do not officiate as a minister of the gospel. To which he does willingly agree."

It was upon the whole "ordered that a letter be writ to the people to whom Mr. Van Vleck did use to preach" which being done, "by the moderator, (Jeddiah Andrews) and Mr. Hampton;" a postscript is added in these words: "The reason of this advice for his not preaching was this, that the Presbytery could not find proof clear and positive enough to prove the crime against him, yet Mr. Van Vleck's vindication did not appear sufficient."

The case was reopened when Mr. Van Vleck brought in certain papers immediately after the breaking up of Presbytery to clear himself of the crime charged upon him. No order was made to examine the validity of these papers, but they were referred to a commission consisting of Andrews, McNish, and Hampton, who after examining the validity of the papers, adjudged "that he was guilty." And Mr. Van Vleck being absent and nothing appearing for his vindication, it was adjudged that his suspension should continue, and the judgment was made final.

Such was the solemn, grave, and conscientious judgment of the court of Christ's house, the first Presbytery set up in America. And if the reader is ready to raise both hands

and hold his breath in amazement, we can tell him that this case has been paralleled many a time since that day in the Presbyterian Church courts by Christian gentlemen sitting as judges and acting on their consciences. Several of which we have in mind, but do not care to specify, because that is no part of the object for which this article was written.

III. The dignity, consequence and importance of the Ruling Elder in the courts of the church since that day has increased in about the same proportion that the attendance of these officers upon the courts has diminished. We fail to find in the records that the Ruling Elder was considered an essential part of Presbytery. The appointment of committees and commissions, the organization of churches, the instalation of ministers and the dissolution of pastoral relation were all effected without the presence of the ruling elder. The Presbytery of 1706 at Philadelphia, and in 1713 at New Castle, were open, transacted all business, and "broke up without the presence of a single ruling elder. Therefore, it is evident, that the ruling elder was not considered an essential factor in the make up of a Presbytery. In 1716 the question was gravely put and voted upon whether an elder "should act here as a representative, notwithstanding the minister's absence." And yet accepting the two instances mentioned, the ruling elders attended the annual meetings in such numbers that a very large majority of the churches were represented by ruling elders in each meeting. As the Presbyterian Church in America formed no distinctive constitution for either its guidance or government till 1787, the presumption is that this first Presbytery was governed in a general way only by the form of government set on foot by the Westminster Assembly. In the debates of that Assembly it was decided that "the office of ruling elder was of divine institution." "But, it remained to define in what this office consisted, and this gave rise to another and very animated debate, and after a very learned and animated discussion, the opinion of the Assembly being

nearly balanced, was laid aside for a time without any definite conclusion." (Hetherington, pages 142-143.) The ruling elder has been buffeted about a good deal by his friends in trying to give him a locus and a status in the church courts. There is no difficulty and all are agreed, on the point, that the ruling elders are the immediate representatives of the people, and chosen by them, that, in conjunction with the pastor or ministers, they may exercise government and discipline, and take the over-sight of the spiritual interest of the particular church which elects them and in which they are ordained to exercise the functions of the office. But when we get above the session and the particular congregation, the atmosphere begins to get a little hazy. The teaching elders who are to "labor in the word and doctrine," possess an office which is declared to be "the first in the church for dignity and usefulness." They take their place in the courts of the church above the session, by virtue of their ordination, to exercise functions which are inherent in the office to which they are set apart by ordination. And these are double, or two fold. The Presbyterian system makes a bold cut across every teaching elder and divides him into a teacher and a ruler. But the system makes no such cut across the ruling elder. He takes his place in the courts of the church, above the session, not by virtue of his ordination alone but by appointment, also, as a representative chosen by the members of another court. And with many the question is still an open one, whether he represents the session, which appoints him, or the congregation which does not appoint him. But, however that may be, he is never and nowhere a teacher as well as a ruler. Therefore, by the genius of the system, whatever may be the declarations of the Book of Church Order, he cannot possess the "same authority in the courts of the church as the minister of the word." He cannot teach there, or anywhere else, as an elder. The power to rule comes by virtue of ordination, but it does not go beyond that, with the ruling elder, he is not ordained to teach.

The courts of the church are not only bodies which have the power to rule, but they have additional powers to interpret and to teach. The last two belong alone to the teaching elder and cannot by him be relegated to any one, neither can they be usurped by any. Here the equation is broken on the one side. The constitution of the church is incoherent and very much tangled up at this point. It claims that the ruling elder possesses "the same authority in the courts of the church as a minister of the word." Yet, in the same clause in which this sweeping declaration is made we find a proviso: That "any official duty devolving upon him (the ruling elder) the performance of which requires the functions pertaining only to the teaching elder, shall be remitted by him for its execution to such minister of the word, being a member of the court, as he may select." (Form Gov. ch. IV. sec. 2-43.) This *proviso*, which was intended to cover the abuse of the principle in making a ruling elder a Moderator, has done much violence to the whole system. For the very genius of the Presbyterian system of courts requires that he who presides over these courts shall have power to exercise the functions of expounding and teaching that law which is to guide their actions and deliberations. For the interpretation of the law is as much a teaching function as the expounding of the Gospel in preaching an opening sermon. In assuming that the ruling elder can do the one, and making provision for an escape from doing the other, is an abuse of the principle and a flagrant violation of the logic of the system. Another hitch comes when the constitution defines what shall constitute a quorum of Presbytery. "Any three ministers belonging to the Presbytery with at least one ruling elder being met at the time and place shall be a quorum competent to proceed to business." (Form, Gov. ch. V. Sec. IV.-74.)

The office of the teaching elder is declared to be "the first in the Church both for dignity and usefulness." Dignity

means elevation of rank—a degree of excellence. But one ruling elder, whose office must be of a lower degree, if the teaching elder is of the first degree, possesses, within himself, the authority in the courts of the Church to upset, and knock out, three degrees of first-class dignity with one degree of second-class dignity. Here the equation is broken on the other side. It may be that right here we have a constitutional explanation of a fact which has so much perplexed and worried the Church in the last few years—why so few ruling elders attend upon the meetings of the higher courts of the Church—as one is to three, so are a very few ruling elders to a great many ministers of the Word. To secure a renewal of attendance, upon the part of this delinquent class, the Church began to cajole, and coax, and coddle, and wheedle, with many promises not warranted by the genius of the Presbyterian system. Knowing that man loves a “little brief authority,” and not forgetting the American’s propensity for office, many overtures were sent up, profound arguments, beat out in long and heavy newspapers and review articles, were set on foot and the thing was accomplished. The mountain labored and the mouse came forth. It was actually engrafted into the organic law of the Church that a ruling elder could, would, and should, be elected Moderator, notwithstanding it is an office many of whose functions he cannot perform.

We have experimented one time in making a very excellent ruling elder and Christian gentleman Moderator of the General Assembly. To be consistent, we ought not to stop with that one experiment. Some time in the future we ought to try it again. It may be that some over sensitive, or over nervous, brother would be shocked at seeing matters go in the courts of the Lord’s house as they might go in a court of common pleas, or legislative hall, or political convention, as the ruling elder chosen might be an eminent civil judge or distinguished legislator, or a successful manipulator of State conventions, each governing by

the rules which prevail in the province of his chosen field of action. Having made it lawful is the Church now reaching the conviction that it is not expedient?

It will not be many years before the Church will be forced either to abandon the very genius of the Presbyterian system or to re-write the Book of Church Order. For about every change, or amendment, made since the book was first adopted in 1879, differentiates it from the genius of the Presbyterian system.

At first (1561) the Church of Scotland put the deacon and the ruling elder on the same footing. "The affairs of each congregation were managed by the ministers, elders and deacons who constituted the kirk session." (Hethington Church, Scotland, page 551.) So the deacon, no more nor less, than the elder, was a part of the session. The second Book of Discipline (1578) divided the whole polity of the Church into three divisions—doctrine, discipline, distribution—according to this arrangement there arose a three-fold sort of officer bearer in the Church—minister, ruling elder, deacon—all these were "call it beane generall waird ministers of the kirk." The deacon held his office in the session on an equal footing with the ruling elder, until 1645, when the Church of Scotland adopted the Westminster Form of Government. It was this Westminster Assembly which cut the deacon loose from his place in the session. This Westminster Assembly settled for the Church the fact that the "office of ruling elder was of divine institution." But "it remained to define in what that office consisted." That question was never settled by that Assembly. And it remains to this day an unsettled question.

IV. In addition to the record books of the Presbytery it was (1709) "Ordered, That every letter sent by Presbytery be inserted in a book appointed by the Presbytery for that purpose and this be done by Mr. Andrews." From this letter book we get a great many valuable facts and much

general information which would otherwise be entirely lost. We get an insight, through some of these letters, into the difficulties with which these fathers had to contend. And we also learn that they wrote and talked in a tone much more authoritative and consequential than might, with perfect safety to the Church, be indulged in at this day. We submit a few samples of the ore to give our readers some idea of the quality and grade of the metal." The Christian people of New Castle had tangled matters up between themselves and their pastor until there was a "misunderstanding" which had gradually spread to the congregation in the country. For the reader must know that the congregation in the country, like the minister in the town, were Irish in the quality and tone of their piety as well as their national temperament. And learning that there was something like a "row" in the church in town there is nothing more natural than that they should "jist go down and take a leetle bit of a hand in it." Matters pretty rapidly reached that point where Presbytery had to intervene. The letter began, "Out of a Christian compassion that we have towards you, we can but commiserate your present circumstances, and are heartily sorry for the misunderstanding that is between you and Mr. Wilson; as also for the difference that is between you and our Christian friends in the country. We would be glad to fall upon a healing method to remedy these unhappy divisions. And gentlemen, you may be assured that whatever (in duty) lies within the compass of our power shall not be wanting; but after second thought, and a due sense of your condition, we fear that such changes as are set on foot among you in the present circumstances concerning a minister may prove detrimental to you and our common interest; especially when we take notice that nothing particular has been offered to us by you concerning our brother Wilson why he may not continue in his present charge and function toward you as formerly. A general

dissatisfaction is the principle (it seems) which is presented both in your letter to us and by your, and our friend, Mr. Janvier." After a few more sentences about another minister whose name is mentioned and who appears to have been too shrewd a man to want a church which would fall out with its pastor without being able to give any better reason than "a general dissatisfaction;" the letter concludes after this fashion: "And therefore we entreat, nay require, you in the Lord to concur with us." This settled the matter and Mr. Wilson continued to serve the church as its pastor. There appears to have been a kind of pious fuss at Woodbridge, in which almost all, if not all, the members felt it to be their Christian duty to engage. The matter finally came before Presbytery. That body wrote a letter to the congregation from which we make the following extracts: "Upon the whole matter and after our serious reflections thereon we cannot but with grief tell you that we fear there has been fault on all hands and that the most innocent have reason for self-condemnation; how much others then that have been the unhappy causes, fomenters and promoters of such unchristian distraction and animosities. Woe unto them by whom offenses come. Having mentioned this we cannot pass on till in the bowels of Christ we beseech and request you to look back and repent, to love and unite, in the true fear of God and the interest of his Kingdom for the future."

From these extracts the reader will understand that the fathers of this first Presbytery were not disposed to indulge in blandishments or pious taffy in dealing with recalcitrant churches and their obstreperous members.

In 1709 the Presbytery of Dublin addressed a letter to this Presbytery through the courtesy of Mr. Alexander Sinclair, a member of the Presbytery of Dublin directed to Mr. John Henry, a member of this Presbytery, expressing a desire that "a correspondent may be settled and continued from time to time." The request was also made that

“an account of the ecclesiastical affairs with a promise of all assistance they could afford or procure by interest of others.” From this correspondence we gather the following which may best be stated in the language of the letter : “As to the state of the church our interest truly is very weak and we cannot relate this matter without sorrow of heart, since it is too much owing to the neglect of ministers at home. Our late Rev. Brother Francis Makemie prevailed with some ministers of London to undertake the support of two itinerants for the space of two years and after that time to send two more upon the same conditions allowing the former after that time to settle which if accomplished had proved of more than creditable advantage to these parts considering how far scattered most of the inhabitants be. But alas, they drew back their hands and we have reason to lament their deficiency, Had our friends at home been equally watchful and diligent as the Episcopalian Society at London, our interest in most foreign plantations probably might have carried the balance. In all Virginia there is but one small congregation at Elizabeth River, and some few families favoring our way in Rappahannock and York. In Maryland only four ; in Pennsylvania five and in the Jerseys two, which bounds, with some places of New York, make up all the bounds we have any members from, and at present some of these are vacant.”

This letter indicates that the spirit of mission work was alive in the heart of these Irish Presbyterians and that they had the keenest appreciation of the work in the foreign field, for at that day America and her plantations were six times or more as far away (in point of time) from Dublin as China, Japan or Corea are from America today. Let the reader think for a little space. The letter was written in Dublin in November, 1709, and answered by Presbytery in a letter written September, 1710. Such was the tardiness with which correspondence was carried on nearly two

hundred years ago. These fathers had what we believe was the true idea of the work required to build up our Church in that day and equally so now if the Church could only see it. It might be called the Francis Makemie idea of home mission work, itinerating for the space of two years and after that to settle. If each Presbytery would require every licentiate to itinerate for two years before settling, their support being furnished by Presbytery, every county in every Presbytery would have Presbyterian churches, and settled pastors would be more numerous and more permanent. But this is not the time or place to discuss that matter. A similar correspondence was opened with the synod of Glasgow brought about by a letter from the Rev. James Brown of the synod to "some good friends" intimating that the synod was willing. The letter of the Presbytery to the synod bears date September, 1710. Among other things the letter says: "We are thankful that by the Divine Providence our endeavors and poor essays have not been altogether in vain. The number of our ministers from the respective providences is ten in all, three from Maryland, five from Pennsylvania and two from East Jersey." After setting forth the desolate condition of sundry vacant places the letter proceeds: "May it therefore please the pious and Reverend Synod in compassion to desolate souls in America perishing for want of vision to send over one or more ministers and support them for longer or shorter time. We further represent that according to the best of our judgment that forty pounds sterling, paid in Scotland to be transmitted in goods, will be a competency for the support of each minister you send, provided that of your pious and Christian benevolence you suitably fit them out."

Correspondence was likewise opened up and set on foot with certain ministers in London who expressed the greatest interest and took the deepest concern in planting the Gospel in these "American plantations." Among the most

conspicuous and prominent of these was the Rev. Thomas Reynolds, of London. Mr. Reynolds' letter bore date December 24, 1712. After promising to advance thirty pounds for the support of one or more ministers, the letter closes in these words: "I desire to hear from you as soon as may be, and would be glad to be an instrument of disappointing any that encourage no expectation from us." The answer to this letter bore date September 17, 1713. From these extracts it will appear that from Ireland, England and Scotland, the spirit of Foreign Missions was alive in the bosom of the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterians of the kingdom of Great Britain were laying the foundations and building the Church for Christ, in the distant American colonies, more than a hundred years before Alexander Duff sailed for India, or Adoniram Judson "embarked from Salem for Calcutta;" and almost a century before William Carey, with his family, set sail for Bengal. This last meeting of this unique, original, and first Presbytery in America, was held in New Castle, in September, 1716. Provisions were there and then made for the organization of the Synod of Philadelphia. The order runs in these words, "It having pleased the Divine Providence so to increase our numbers, as that, after much deliberation, we judge it may be more serviceable to the interest of religion to divide ourselves into subordinate meetings, or Presbyteries, constituting one annually as a Synod, to meet at Philadelphia, or elsewhere, to consist of all the members of each subordinate Presbytery for this year at least; therefore, it is agreed by the Presbytery, after serious deliberation, that the first subordinate meeting, or Presbytery, to meet at Philadelphia, or elsewhere, as they shall see fit, do consist of the following men: Powell, Orr, Bradner and Morgan."

This "first subordinate meeting of Presbytery" was and is the Presbytery of Philadelphia from that day on to the present time. Like provision was made for a second and a third, with recommendations for the organization or erection

of a fourth, on Long Island. The time of the meeting of these Presbyteries was "left to their own discretion." It was "ordered that a book be kept by each of the said Presbyteries containing a record of their proceedings and that the said book be brought every year to our anniversary Synod to be revised." The record goes on to say, "Our next meeting being appointed as Synod, it is ordered that the present Moderator open the same by preaching; and that the Moderator of the last Synod open the next by preaching always for the time coming, upon the first Tuesday of our meeting, at 10 o'clock."

There is no record that this original Presbytery was ever opened or closed with prayer during the whole period of its separate and independent existence.

R. K. SMOOT.

Austin, Texas.