4. See also Iain Murray, *The Reformation of the Church* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 203–230.
5. Mitchell, 257ff.
6. Ibid., 264. See also my unpublished dissertation, "Covenanted Uniformity in Religion: The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners upon the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly" (University of Pittsburgh, 1976), 327 note.
7. "Covenanted Uniformity in Religion," 257.
8. Mitchell, 264.
9. *The Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, Form of Church-Government, Discipline, &c. of Public Authority in the Church of Scotland . . .* (Glasgow: Robert and Thomas Duncan, 1771).
10. *The Confession of Faith*; (Inverness, 1983), 412–16; Murray, *Reformation of the Church*, 226–30.

Edmund P. Clowney

7 Distinctive Emphases in Presbyterian Church Polity

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY is to identify emphases in Presbyterian polity that are central rather than peripheral and that contrast with continental Reformed polity. In view, broadly speaking, is the "genius" of Reformed polity on the continent and the "genius" of Presbyterian polity in Britain.

However, demonstrating the differences between these polities is an enterprise in which in some sense I would hope not to succeed. I am sanguine in the expectation of failure for a number of reasons. First, in both geographical areas the Reformed churches sought to order their government under the authority of Scripture. Renouncing "human inventions" in doctrine, worship, and polity, they sought to reform the church under Christ the King by obeying his rule in Scripture. It was not their common esteem for Calvin or their common experience in the work of reformation that produced their agreement in doctrine and order. It was their submission to the Word of God. Second, the leaders of the Reformation movement enjoyed many opportunities for communication through literature, correspondence, and consultation. "Enjoyed" might not be an adequate term; some of the best contacts were developed by men who were fellow-exiles at different periods in Geneva, London, or Amsterdam. Finally, both the direct contacts and the similarities of situations tended to produce not only common agreements but also common disagreements. Differences on particulars of polity did not come into existence along geographical lines, in spite of political pressures toward national uniformity.

In the conservative Reformed and Presbyterian tradition we recognize that our common convictions are central and extensive, and that they offer a firm basis for approaching our differences. We also recognize that each of the churches represented could muster a variety of opinions on issues of church polity. Some of these differences might be labeled as Scotch or Dutch "genius"; other differences may reveal how far we have progressed beyond our fathers, or perhaps how far we have fallen behind them.

We ought not to assume, therefore, that differences that now exist between, let us say, the Christian Reformed Church and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church may be laid to substantial differences that must obtain between continental and British polity. Certainly Presbyterianism in the United States is heir to the continent as well as to Scotland and Ireland.[1] Individuals and congregations from Holland, France, and Germany (to mention three main streams) have brought their convictions and practice into the life of American Presbyterianism.

Nevertheless reflection on possible differences between church polity in the Dutch and Scotch traditions can be useful, particularly if we focus on the issues rather than the continuity or discontinuity of tradition. Let me propose two emphases of British or Scottish Presbyterianism that may be regarded as both central and distinctive. The first is often called the *regulative principle*. The second I will call the *organic principle*.

The Regulative Principle

The regulative principle is stated in these words in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Chapter XX:2): "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."

The key words here are "or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship." Of course the Christian conscience cannot be bound in anything to do what God's Word forbids. Yet it may be bound to do what God's Word does not expressly require. This is commonly the case in obeying the authority of the state for conscience sake. But the confession marks out an area where the conscience cannot be bound by any addition to the Word. That is the area of matters of faith or worship. For the church to go beyond Scripture in requiring religious belief or observance is to destroy the liberty of the Christian conscience.

What is stated generally in this chapter is applied with particular force to worship in the next (Chapter XXI:1): "But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His

own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture." Any way of worship not commanded in the Bible is therefore forbidden. This principle is established not merely from the divine institution of worship, but from the divine limitation of worship in scriptural revelation. "Will-worship," the arbitrary worship of God in ways chosen by men rather than God is excluded.

The general principle limiting the requirements of the church to the requirements of Scripture is, in the confession, closely related to the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture. In the first chapter (I:6) where the sufficiency and finality of Scripture are asserted, the following qualification is added: "Nevertheless, we acknowledge . . . that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."

Leaving aside for the moment the question of the boundaries of "circumstances," we find this qualification makes a sweeping claim. Only in some circumstances of worship and church government does Christian prudence operate or the light of nature prove determinative. Even in this area the general rules of the Word are to be observed.[2] Note that these are circumstances, not a substantial part of government or worship. When the Book of Common Prayer pleads religious value for ceremonies not contained in Scripture ("to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification whereby he might be edified"), that very plea shatters the argument that these are only circumstances of worship. If the ceremony has a purported value, it is no mere circumstance but a significant observance.

Further, only *some* circumstances are in this class of things to be determined by prudence. This is true because Scripture prescribes, by precept or normative example, many circumstances of government and worship.

Finally, these circumstances are described as "common to human actions and societies." Not the circumstances that are distinctive for the order of church government or worship can be determined apart from the Word, but only those that are common. In debating the propriety of the use of instrumental music in worship, this question would require discussion. Is the use of such accompaniment to group singing only a circumstance common in our particular culture? Or is the instrument distinctively religious and therefore its use an observance rather than a circumstance?

Of course some circumstances may entail much more regulation than others. The reaching of a decision by majority vote may be considered a circumstance of church government common to human societies. Yet the

elaboration of such a circumstance for the direction of the church may require numerous stipulations.

We must further note that in this first chapter of the confession government is linked with worship in reference to the regulative principle. Church government, too, has been instituted by Christ: "The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate" (Chapter XXX:1). Church ordinances respecting government could also presume to bind the conscience if they went beyond Scripture. In government, therefore, as in faith and worship generally, what is not commanded is forbidden, with the exception of some circumstances. Also, the important Presbyterian manifesto, the *Jus Divinum Regiminus Ecclesiastici* (London: 1646), construes the divine right of Presbyterian government as including the light of nature on such important circumstances as the need of a society for distinct government, majority rule, and the right of appeal from lower to higher judicatories (Chapter III).

The regulative principle is not a distinctive principle of English as over against continental Reformed leadership. It is clearly stated in Article Thirty-two of the *Belgic Confession* (1561). Rulers of the church may institute and establish ordinances "yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only master, hath instituted. And, therefore, (*c'est pourquoi*) we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatsoever."

Nevertheless the regulative principle has become a more distinctive emphasis in British and Scottish Presbyterianism. The reason is not far to seek. It lies in the century-long Puritan struggle against state-imposed forms of government and worship. From the time of the Elizabethan settlement particularly, the Puritan struggle for a truly Reformed church was directed against those compromising survivals of extra-scriptural ordinances that seemed so politically expedient to the Queen. It was the campaign to the death against vestments and bishops that burned the regulative principle into the consciousness of British Presbyterianism.

Does this emphasis mark a real departure from Reformed polity on the continent? Dr. James I. Packer holds that it does. "The idea that direct biblical warrant, in the form of precept or precedent, is required to sanction every item included in the public worship of God was in fact a Puritan innovation, which crystallised out in the course of the prolonged debates that followed the Elizabethan settlement."[3] Packer further argues that the Puritans were mistaken in thinking that this principle is a necessary implication of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. The disagreement relates, he says "to the interpretation and contents of Holy Scripture rather than to the formal principle of the nature and extent of its authority."[4]

Both of Packer's contentions merit careful consideration. In the second, I think he is certainly right, although I suppose he would agree that the confusion could arise only because certain of the teachings of Scripture seemed so evident to the Puritans. From an abstract standpoint it is true that our having an inspired and authoritative revelation from God does not necessarily mean that the revelation must contain commandments or prohibitions sufficiently specific to determine the form of church worship and government. Some Puritan reasoning, particularly that grounded in a "light of nature" starting-point seemed to find it inconceivable that a revelation given by Christ to his church could fail to provide an order for the church. "Every society needs a distinct government: the church is a society and this need must be met in the revelation of the King to his church."

The difficulty for this line of reasoning is the dramatic contrast between the New Testament and the Old with respect to the ordering of government and worship. The New Testament has no Book of Leviticus, and for that matter, no Manual of Discipline like that of the Qumran Community. This contrast gives some plausibility to the contention that no form of government is instituted in the New Testament. Those who hold this do not deny that various officers and organizational forms are evident in the New Testament. But they hold that these are not normative for subsequent ages. They only represent the early history of organizational variation (or perhaps improvement) that has continued in the church.

The cure for this unfocused view of the New Testament doctrine of the church is a strong dose of biblical theology. The form as well as the content of the New Testament is significant, but it does not signify the dissolving of the normative in the historically descriptive. The New Testament does not have the form of a dictionary of theology, a legal code, a directory for worship, or a form of government but it abounds in normative direction for all of these concerns. The *Form of Government* drawn up by the Westminster Assembly follows a wise course in stressing first the kingship of Christ and his absolute authority over his church, and then in proceeding to describe the officers appointed by Christ for rule in his church. Biblical theology may not be given its due, but neither is it omitted. The distinction between the office of the apostles and prophets on the one hand and that of pastors, teachers, governors, and deacons on the other can be made only with an eye on the progress of redemptive history in the New Testament. In doctrine, ethics, worship, and order the development of New Testament biblical theology is not open-ended and goalless. Rather it traces the way in which Christ, who is the Alpha and Omega of all revelation showed to his apostles the fullness of the "all things" he commanded to be taught to the nations. Really, we are in a far better position than our Puritan forefathers to discern the positive riches of biblical theology with respect to the order of the church. For example, it should

be clearer to us that the Gospel of Luke is no less significant for church order than the Book of Acts which completes it.

Now if, as a matter of fact, there is authoritative revelation from Christ, the King of the church, respecting the order of his kingdom; if the keys of the kingdom are his to give and are to be used by church governors meeting in his name; then the problem of conscience that the Puritans faced in fact as well as in theory cannot be evaded. It is a necessary corollary of the ministerial character of rule in the church. No man or court can rule in his own name or in collective human authority. Rule must be in Christ's name, in his authority. Only Christ's Word has that authority; the authority of his ministers is therefore declarative, not legislative. All of which brings us to perceive what the Puritans perceived, but which Calvin surely perceived before them.[5] The church cannot make new laws, it can only enforce by spiritual means the laws of Christ. It cannot plead the general directives of Scripture (that all be done to the glory of God, 1 Cor 10:31; Rom 14:7–8; decently and in order, 1 Cor 14:40; to edification, 1 Cor 13:26; and without creating a stumblingblock, Rom 14:21; 1 Cor 10:23) as warrant for specific requirements in worship or order that bind the conscience with substantive observances and duties.

Here there appears to be an important difference, for example, in the formulations of the Christian Reformed Church and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It may be pointedly phrased in the substitute language proposed by a committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for Article 29 of the church order adopted by the Synod of 1965. The key sentence is:

> The decisions of the assemblies shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.

The Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church suggested the following revision which would in the opinion of the committee make the article conformable to the standards of that church:

> The decisions of the assemblies shall be considered settled and binding unless it is proved that they are without warrant in the Word of God or conflict with the Church Order.

According to the regulative principle as set forth in the *Westminster Confession*, to require obedience to any decision of an assembly that cannot be proved to conflict with the Word of God is to violate the liberty of the Christian conscience which is free from the commandments of men which are beside the Word in matters of faith or worship.

This difficulty cannot be overcome from the standpoint of the *Westminster Confession* by pleading the voluntary subscription of the churches to the church order. It has been urged that the authority of ecclesiastical assemblies does not finally bind the conscience apart from the Word since

the binding force rests upon an initial mutual agreement to be governed according to the provisions of the church order. But surely this reduces the church from its position as a divine institution to that of an arbitrary social organization. The church cannot define its authority in terms of social contract. The sentence of excommunication does not deliver a man to the Baptists but to the devil. The government of the church must be exercised in Christ's name; it must bind men's consciences, declaring that what is bound on earth is bound in heaven. For that very reason the church cannot bind beyond the Word.

Differences of judgment may exist as to defining the circumstances of government and worship.[6] Allowance needs to be made for varying circumstances, and indeed for changes in what may properly be regarded as circumstances (does a *Geneva* gown now mean what a surplice meant in Elizabethan England?). But precisely at the point of binding the conscience the church must preserve that liberty in which Christ has set his people free from the traditions of men.

The Organic Principle

The second central principle, that seems to convey a distinction of emphasis between British and Dutch Reformed polity is what we may call the organic principle in the Presbyterian tradition. In Britain Presbyterians had to struggle not only against the Elizabethan settlement but also against their Independent brethren who had shared the Puritan cause with them. Independents were among the members of the Westminster Assembly. The *Jus Divinum* declaration of Presbyterian divines may reflect some of the answers given by the assembly to queries from parliament about the "divine right" of a church government distinct from the state. The comparison of the Presbyterian and Independent positions on church government in *Jus Divinum* may not do justice to the actual position of the Independents, but it shows how a vigorous rejection of Independency led to a stress on the organic elements of Presbyterian government.[7]

In contrast to Roman Catholic prelacy and Episcopalian hierarchy the Presbyterian "genius" was the rule of the church presbyters. Three distinguishable points are included in "presbyterial" government in this context: (1) No permanent office in the church is higher than that of the preaching presbyter. (2) Government in the church is not exclusively clerical. Calvinistic "church governors" share with pastors the ruling function. (3) Church rule is joint, not merely individual.

In contrast to Independency the emphasis on presbyterial government was somewhat different. As against the congregationalism of Independency, the Presbyterians stressed the authority of church governors: "The church-governors act immediately as the servants of Christ, and as appointed by him."[8] They are not mere deputies of the congregation, nor are their decisions subject to review or determination by the congregation.

As against the principle of Independency the emphasis fell not on the "Parochiall Presbyteries"[9] but on the "greater" or "Classical" presbyteries.[10] "Jesus Christ our Mediator hath laid down in his Word a pattern of a Presbyterial government in common over divers single Congregations in one Church, for a rule to his Church in all after ages."

The *Form of Presbyterial Church Government* of the Westminster Assembly identifies the "Classical Assembly" as the presbytery: "The scripture doth hold out a presbytery in a church. A presbytery consisteth of ministers of the word and such other public officers as are agreeable to and warranted by the word of God to be church-governors to join with the ministers in the government of the church. The scripture doth hold forth, that many particular congregations may be under one presbyterian government."[11]

The significance of this position is far-reaching. The scriptural model in view is the "city-church" of Jerusalem and of Ephesus. These are seen as unified churches under one presbyterial government but including a number of congregations. There is therefore manifest the unity of the church in the fullest sense beyond the local congregation. The membership of preaching presbyters in the presbytery is therefore in no sense artificial. They are members of the church of the city; the scope of their teaching gifts makes it entirely natural that the gathering in which they take counsel be that of the city rather than that of a "house-church." In this broader unity they are in subjection to their brethren, including those of similar gifts who will be best prepared to encourage and admonish them in the discharge of their office. The Westminster *Form of Government* does not even think it essential to demonstrate that the membership of the local congregations in the city was fixed. The unity of the church comes to expression on the local level and at the metropolitan level. We can even say, if a local church is dissolved, the names of the members may be carried on the rolls of Presbytery.

In the *Jus Divinum* contrast between Independency and Presbyterianism, the following is the first antithesis:

> In the Independent government no other visible Church of Christ is acknowledged but only a single congregation meeting in one place to partake of all ordinances. In the Presbyterial government one general visible church of Christ on earth is acknowledged, and all particular churches, and single congregations are but as similar parts of that whole.[12]

The analysis of presbytery in the Westminster *Form of Government* actually points beyond the "parts of the whole" scheme. The unity of the church is fully recognized at both the local (parish) and the area (city) level. The New Testament presents a church that shows unity at local, regional, and ecumenical levels (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Cor 11:8;

12:13; Acts 8:1; 11:22,26; 13:1; Acts 9:31; 1 Cor 10:32; 12:28; Gal 1:13; Eph 1:22; Col 1:18).

Underlying this flexibility is the heavenly reality of the church of Christ which is manifested in the world. The doctrine of the church in Scripture is centered upon the Lord of the covenant, the Savior. It is in its structure theological through and through. Many of the problems that plague polity discussions are false problems because they are not theologically grounded. If the church is approached from a sociological rather than theological standpoint the individual will be sundered from the community, and authority will become magisterial rather than ministerial. The confusion about the relation of the aspects of visibility and invisibility of the church can only grow until it is again recognized that the church as invisible is not some abstract ideal, but simply the church as God sees it, in contrast with the church as we see it. So also the church cannot be initially defined in terms either of the local congregation or of the church universal.

In the theological approach of Scripture the church is the people of God, the kingdom and body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit. The history of the scholarly discussions of the term *ecclesia* is revealing.[13] Before Harnack and Sohm the term was referred to the local assembly by many scholars. The "assembling" of local believers was regarded as accounting for the term *ecclesia.* A shift in opinion linked the Greek term with its Old Testament equivalent *ēdhah* and understood *ecclesia* as describing the congregation of the new people of God whether assembled or not. Neither explanation does justice to the use of *ēdhah* and *ecclesia* in Scripture. The terms are active in force, describing an actual assembling. The active force, however, establishes the theological meaning. The "assembly" of God is not any gathering of the people of God. It is their gathering before the face of the Lord in the definitive assembly at Sinai, in "the day of the assembly" (Deut 4:10 LXX; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16).

In the subsequent assemblies of covenant renewal and in the festival assemblies before the Lord in Jerusalem the people of God are repeatedly manifested as those who stand before him. In the New Testament realization of the people of God the mount of the Lord to which the people come is not Sinai nor even the earthly Zion, but the heavenly Zion (Hebrews 12). Here the festival assembly of the holy ones is gathered, and the saints and angels are assembled where Christ is and where the mercy seat is sprinkled with his blood. The immediacy with which the New Testament grasps the reality of the heavenly assembly gives a different perspective to the concept of "the church of God which is at Corinth." Corinth is one place of manifestation, for God has "much people" in that city, but the church is not the church of Stephanas (16:15), or of Paul, Peter, or Apollos (1:12), or of Corinth. It is the church of God; therefore it includes those who are called to be saints and they are addressed with "all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus in every place" (1:2).

The organic concept of the church that appears in the New Testament has made a particularly deep mark upon the Presbyterian mind. Presbyterian polity does not stand against the centralized catholicism of Rome and the decentralized independency of congregationalism as a mediating way. Rather it presents a more theological, Christ-centered, spiritual view of the church as defined not by one earthly hierarchical center nor by many earthly congregational centers, but by a heavenly center that requires multiform earthly manifestation. Earthly assemblies do not define but manifest the nature and the center of the church.

This insight is characteristic of all the Reformed communions. W. Heyns, for example, may describe the Reformed polity by saying "Only in the local church does the concept, the significance, the task of the church come to its rights."[14] But he then goes on to balance this statement with a recognition of the organic unity of the church beyond the congregational limits.

Again, however, there seems to be a significant difference in emphasis. The authors of the Westminster *Form of Government* could not have written Heyns' first statement, and Presbyterians in general would feel called to dispute it. Some aspects of Reformed order, as distinct from Presbyterian polity, reflect the place of primacy given to the local church and its consistory. Ministers of the gospel are members of the local church and are subject to the discipline of the consistory. This is tempered, however, by the requirement that the concurring judgment of the consistory of the nearest neighboring church of the classis must be secured for the suspension of a minister. For the deposition of a minister the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies is necessary.

Consistency with this position requires that even ministers called to foreign missionary service be subject to the discipline of the consistory of a local church. This practice is maintained although the direction of missionary work has been placed in the hands of the synod.

A further reflection of emphasis on the primacy of the congregation is the representative character of the classes. There are no permanent members of the classis and those who meet in classical assemblies are delegated as representatives of the consistories. Since the minister of each church is regularly made a delegate to classis, the practical difference in the membership of any meeting is small. There does appear to be a difference, however, in understanding the function of the classis. In the Reformed churches an associate understanding of the classis contrasts with a more integral conception of the presbytery.

To the Presbyterian it may appear that the associative view had produced a surprisingly high estimate of the powers of classical and especially of synodical assemblies. Indeed, at times the associative character of these bodies is made the ground of what appears to the Presbyterian to be their arbitrary authority. The churches have bound themselves to associate

according to a certain order and therefore must be bound by the decisions produced in the operation of the order.

In the Presbyterian view the character of office in the church is intimately related to the organic unity of the church. Early British Independency regarded a minister's ordination as ceasing when he left a pastoral charge. Since office was in the local congregation he must be re-ordained to the pastoral office in another congregation when a new call was issued. Presbyterians saw this practice as a misunderstanding of the character of office in Christ's church. The gifts by which a man is endued for office are gifts of Christ to his church as one body (Eph 4:7–12). Good order requires that the gift for rule be recognized by those among whom it is exercised, but the whole body of Christ, not simply its manifestation in one congregation is the fellowship of the saints for whose edification the gifts of Christ are given.

Do these differences, then, indicate another "genius" requiring separate development of two irreconcilable traditions? The very modifications that each tradition has undergone and the variations of conviction that each shelters would indicate that this is not the case. For both historical traditions the authority of Scripture is regulative of all faith and practice, for both the unity of the church comes to expression beyond the level of the local congregation, for both office in the church derives from the gift of Christ and is to be discharged as a stewardship to him. No "genius" can be isolated as distinctive that compares with the "genius" that is in common. What is needed rather is a deeper appreciation of the Reformed faith in its understanding of the sovereign rule of Christ in the church as his body. Even in the differences of emphasis that we have the solution is not a simple obliteration of one or the other, or a simple synthesis of the two, but rather a new appreciation of the controlling theological principles from which our understanding of polity springs.

Particularly in the doctrine of the church as Christ's body and as the fellowship of the Spirit there are refreshing springs of truth from which we can draw together. No church government can operate apart from the power of the Spirit and no improvements in understanding polity can be made apart from an illumined understanding of what the Spirit says to the churches.

NOTES

1. Leonard J. Trinterud shows this in *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), 15–52. Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1851) also shows this, though rightly stressing Scotch-Irish leadership.

2. On the following section see James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, Volume I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868), 340–75, and especially the citations from George Gillespie.

Eph

3. "The Puritan Approach to Worship" in *Diversity in Unity* (Papers read at the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, December 1963), 4–5.

4. Ibid.

5. John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church*, Volume 2 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849; reprinted by Eerdmans, 1958), 118: "First, whatever is not commanded, we are not free to choose." See also p. 122.

6. Sometimes debates about the extent of "circumstantials" may unfortunately be cast as debates about the regulative principle. Charles Hodge hotly protests against Thornwell: "There is as much difference between this extreme doctrine of divine right, this idea that everything is forbidden which is not commanded, as there is between this free, exultant Church of ours, and the mummified forms of medieval Christianity. . . . The doctrine need only be clearly propounded to be rejected" *Discussions in Church Polity* (New York: Scribner's, 1878), 133. But the discussion was about the propriety of church boards. Thornwell opposed them on the ground that they were no part of scriptural church government. Hodge defended them on the ground that the form of government prescribed in the New Testament includes only general principles or features and that the church is free to arrange matters of detail. The debate misconceives the issue. One may question, on Hodge's ground, whether the structure of boards is a detail. Further, some of the form of government that Hodge must admit to be prescribed in Scripture consists of "details." It is the meaning of the proposed innovation in terms of scriptural polity that must be determined. Does it bind the consciences of God's people by introducing a new authority structure to which they must submit? Or does it merely arrange the circumstances or organization to allow for the full operation of scriptural government in the particular situation?

7. This section of *Jus Divinum* is reprinted in Iain Murray, ed., *The Reformation of the Church* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 294–96.

8. Ibid., 295.

9. *Jus Divinum* (London, 1647, Second ed.), 205.

10. Ibid., 211, 213.

11. Iain Murray, 218–19.

12. Iain Murray, 294.

13. See Krister Stendahl, "Kirche im Urchristentum," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Volume 3 (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959), Cols. 1297–1304.

14. W. Heyns, *Kybernetiek* (Grand Rapids, 1910 mimeo.), 157.

Part II

The American Presbyterian Experience

Princeton Theological Seminary