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Entered according to Act of Congress.

Advertisement.

The Philadelphia Baptist Association, met at Philadelphia October 5th, 1795, judging our former Treatise of Church Discipline to be materially defective, appointed the writer to revise the same, or write a new one against the next association.

At their next meeting, in 1796, he laid before them the reasons why it was not done, which were approved of, and he was requested to prepare it against their session.

Being met at Lower Dublin, October 3d, 1797, it was read to them, and they appointed a committee of one person from each church to revise it.

The said committee met at Philadelphia, on Wednesday the 13th of December following, and after making some alterations, chiefly verbal, it was agreed it should be printed for the use of the churches.

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It will be understood, the writer availed himself of all the help he could derive from such writers on the subject as he had by him, or could find; and he hopes it will appear, he has bestowed some pains to render the work serviceable, both as to comprehensiveness of matter and plainness of manner, so far as the requisite brevity would admit.

He thinks it unnecessary to add any thing farther, save that he would be beg leave to impress on the minds of the brethren the few following particulars.

First; That they should be careful in the admission of members. Let there be pretty clear evidence of a work of grace. Slackness, or inattention here, has been the bane of the church, in all ages.

Secondly; Let there be most unremitting attention to maintain strict discipline. The glory of the church, the credit of religion, and the prosperity of Zion, depend, in a high degree, on the circumspect walk of its professors, and the vigilant zeal of all, especially of the officers, for the support of order and gospel discipline.

Thirdly; That the professors of religion should walk together in love and Christian union is of material consideration. Behold how good, says the psalmist, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity. "See how these Christians love one another," was the observation of the Heathens, respecting the Christians of the first age. What a pity, that the members of the same family, and even children of the same heavenly Father, and who is also the God of peace, should disagree and wrangle like the sons of darkness.

Fourthly; Be very diligent and circumspect in the discharge of the various duties you owe to God, to yourselves, to one another, and to those of the world. Let all have occasion to observe, that you have been with Jesus, and learned of him. Walk worthy, says the apostle, of the vocation wherewith you are called.

I will only add; That you be particularly careful, to maintain and preserve temper, coolness, and impartiality, in your meetings of business. To be rigid, obstinate, partial, passionate, and overbearing, in administering the concerns of the house of God: how unlike the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus! how unworthy of office under their divine Master.

Now, that the knowledge of God may cover the earth, and his saving power prevail among all nations; and that the churches of Christ may shine in purity of doctrine, strictness of discipline, and in the beauty of holiness, is the unfeigned and fervent prayer of, your's in all gospel service.

SAMUEL JONES.

LOWER DUBLIN,

Dec. 26, 1797.

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Treatise of Church Discipline,

&c.

CHAPTER I.

Of a Gospel Church.

1. Εκκλησια, the word in the original for Church, signifies, *to be called out of*; that is, a gospel church consists of such persons, as have been *called* out of a state of nature into a state of grace, *called* with an effectual calling, *called* out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son, or are judged in charity to be so called. Rom. i. 6, 7. viii. 30. 1 Cor. i. 2. Eph. iv. 1. Heb. iii. 1. 2 Tim. i. 9. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

2. The word church sometimes means the whole body of the elect, and is commonly called the catholic, or universal church. Eph. i. 22, 23. v. 23. Col. i. 18, 24. This comprehends those in Heaven called the church triumphant. Heb. xii. 23. Those on earth, called the church militant. 1 Cor. xii. 28. and those yet to be born.

3. But the church, of which we now treat, means a member of disciples, saints, or believers, that have been baptised, and united together in gospel fellowship, and is called a particular church. "Were baptised," Acts ii. 41. "Tell it into the church," Matt. xiii. 17. "The church that is in their house," Rom. xvi. 5. "That the church may receive edifying," 1 Cor. xiv. 5. "Churches of the saints," 1 Cor. xiv. 33. "The churches of Asia," 1 Cor. xvi. 19. "The church that is a Babylon," 1 Pet. v. 13.

4. A particular church is not parochial, as comprehending all of the same parish; nor diocesan, as if one pastor might have several flocks¹, nor yet provincial, for there were many churches in Judea, Gal. i. 22. Galatia, 1 Cor. xxvi. i. Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1. much less national.

5. A number of believers are united together into a particular church, by an act of mutual confederation. "Gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God," 2 Cor. viii. 5.

6. Whether the requisite number should be twelve or thirteen, because our blessed Lord and his disciples, at the first celebration of the Lord's supper, made that number, or whether three will be sufficient, because of the promise in Matt. xviii. 20. may be doubtful: but there ought to be so many, as to answer the end of that holy institution.

7. When such a number is found in any place, they ought to propose among themselves, or others may propose it to them, to be constituted a church.

¹ We learn from history, that a church never thrives unless the minister lives among them. The practice of pluralities may suit the minister's pride, and save the pockets of the churches, but starves their souls.

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8. For this purpose it will be necessary to appoint a time and place, when they are to meet fasting. One minute or more should be present to assist, and to preach on the occasion. Acts viii.1-4. xi. 22.

9. After a suitable sermon has been preached, this acting minister, being furnished with a list of the names of the candidates, and they standing before them, is to interrogate them; respecting their desire to be constituted a gospel church, their knowledge of, and satisfaction with each other is qualifications, and their purpose and resolution to walk together in church relation, in love to one another, and in obedience to the requirements of Christ in the Gospel, together with such other questions as will involve the leading particulars of a church covenant; and after they have given their assent to the whole, the church covenant² is to be read to them, which they are then, or afterwards, to sign, and the minister pronounces them, in the name of the Lord Jesus, a regular gospel church, giving them, or their representative, the right hand of fellowship, and wishing them prosperity in the Lord. Is. xlv. 5. Amos iii. 3. Acts xi. 23. 2 Cor. vi. 14. ix. 13.

10. It will be understood, that prayers and singing ought to be introduced in their proper places through the whole, and then a suitable address to the constituted church, with a benediction, will close the solemnity.

² *THE CHURCH COVENANT.

We, whose names are under written, being desirous to be constituted a church of Jesus Christ, in this place, and having all due knowledge of one another in point of a work of grace on our hearts, religious principles, and moral characters, and being desirous of enjoying the privileges that appertain to the people of God in a church relation do, in the name of the Lord Jesus, voluntarily and freely give ourselves up to the Lord, and to one another, according to his word, to be one body under one head, jointly to exit and act by the hands and rules of the gospel, and do promise and engage to do all things, by divine assistance, in our different capacities and relations that the Lord has commanded us, and require of us: particularly to deny ourselves, take up our cross, follow Christ, keep the faith, assemble ourselves together, love the brethren, submit one to another in the Lord, care one for another, bear one another's burdens, endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and, finally, to honour, obey, and maintain them that may have the rule over us in the Lord. This is the Covenant we solemnly enter into, in the fear of God, humbly imploring the Divine assistance and blessing that we may be built up and established to the glory of God, the advancement of the Redeemer's interest, and the comfort and edification of our own souls, through the infinite riches of free grace, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord: and now, to the only wise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be worship, honour, power, glory, dominion, and obedience rendered, now and ever more, Amen.

Done at _____ in the country of _____
and state of _____ on the _____
day of _____ in the year of our blessed Lord
and Saviour, _____

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11. It is this mutual consent, confederation, and union of persons into one body, as a particular church, that makes that church distinct from any other church, and that makes the members of it members of that church more than of any other. "Onesimus, who is one of you; Epaphras, who is one of you." Col. iv. 9, 12. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ." Rom. xii. 5.

12. Such particular churches have full power and authority to transact all their own affairs, independent of any other church or churches: such as, to chuse their own officers, receive members, exercise discipline among themselves, exclude members, if need be, and, in general, do every thing that concerns them as a distinct religious corporation. Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. – 2 Thes. iii. 6, 14. Acts i. 5, 23. vi. 3. xv. 4. xxi. 22.

13. No church, however, can be independent of Christ, who is the head of the body, and who, while he has committed the executive power to his church, has retained the legislative in his own hands, or rather, has enacted, by himself or his apostles, all the laws that are necessary, and the church must take heed how they execute the same, as they will answer it to their Lord and Master. "One is your Master, even Christ. Hear ye him." Matt. xvii. 5. xxiii. 8. "There is one law giver." James iv. 12.

14. Under the law, every member of the congregation was a member of the church. The church and congregation were then commensurate, but under the Gospel they are distinct from one another. For though the church be in some sense congregational, yet the church and congregation are two distinct things, so that the one word should not be used for the other, as if they were synonymous.

15. A particular church, constituted as above, is said to be a church essential, but not complete, while destitute of officers. These were either extraordinary or ordinary; the first comprehending apostles, prophets, and evangelists; and the other, bishops,* or ministers, or elders, and deacons; to which some add, ruling elders.

*See the following page.

*The terms in the New Testament expressive of those, that labour in word and doctrine, are the following:

<i>In the Greek.</i>	<i>Rendered in English.</i>	<i>Applied to.</i>
Υηρετης, used 20 times,	Officer, 11 ts. Servant, 4 Minister, 5	Civil Officers, 11 ts. Common Servants, 3 Com. Min. or Serv. 2 Christ's Disciple or Servt. 1
Διακονος	30 Minister, 20 Servant, 7 Deacon, 3	Deacons, 3 times. Gospel Ministers, 12. Satan's Minister, 1. Civil Magistrates, 2. Christ, 2. Apost. 6. Christian, 1. Common Servants, 3.
Λειτχυργος,	5 Minister, 5	Civil Magist. 1. Angels, 1. Christ, 1. Paul, 1. Epaphroditus, 1.
Πρεσβυτερος,	67 Elders, 66 Old Men, 1	Jewish Elders, 31. Gospel Ministers, 14. Elders in age, 7. Apostles, 3. in Revelations, 12.

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Επισκοπος,	5	Bishop, 4 Overseer, 1	Christ, 1. Gospel Ministers, 4.
Διδασκαλος,	58	Master, 47 Doctor, 1 Rabbi, 1 Teacher, 9	Christ, 52. Jewish Teachers, 3. Gospel Ministers, 7. Paul, 2. John, 1. Common Masters, 3.
Κηρυξ,	3	Preacher, 3	Paul, 2. Noah, 1.
Κηρυσσομενος,	1	Preacher,	Gospel Preachers, 1. ³
Οικονομος,	10	Steward, 8 Chamberlain, 1 Governor, 1	Common Stewards, 7. Apostles, 1. Gospel Ministers, 2.
Ποιμην,	17	Shepherd, 16 Pastor, 1	Common Shepherds, 11. Christ, 5. Gospel Ministers, 1.

The Summary of the English exclusive of Christ and the Apostles will be; Ministers 14, Elders 14, Teachers 7, Bishops 3, Stewards 2, Overseer 1. Pastor 1, Preacher 1. Inclusive of Christ and the Apostles, Ministers 25, Elders 17, Teachers 9, Bishops 4, Stewards 3, Overseer 1, Pastor 1, Preacher 3.

CHAPTER II.

Of Ministers.

1. THE names or titles appropriated to those officers in the New Testament, are either such as seem to belong to them, in virtue of their office, as common names, while they have not taken the charge of any particular church, and then they are called teachers or preachers. Acts xiii. 1. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Rom. x. 14.; or they are such as arise from their taking charge of some church, and then they obtain relative titles, and are called pastors. Eph. iv. 11. Overseers or bishops, Acts xx. 17, 28. Elders, 1 Tim. v. 17. Stewards, 1 Cor. iv. 1. Ministers, Col. iv. 7. 1 Tim. iv. 6.

2. The qualifications for this office are pretty clearly pointed out, both in a positive and negative way, natural, moral, and evangelical. Luke xxi. 15. 1 Tim. iii. 2-6. Tit. i. 5-9. 2 Tim. ii. 24. iii. 15, 17. Acts xviii. 24. Rom. ix. 3. xi. 14.

3. To this office persons must be called: First, of God, styled the inward call, which is a zeal for the glory of God in the salvation of the souls of men, and a strong desire to be made useful in that way, with a persuasion of God's designation of the person for the office. This is the voice of God in his conscience. Is. xlix. 5. Jer. i. 5. xxiii. 21. Heb. vi. 4. 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17. Rom. x. 15. Secondly, They must be called of the church, whose duty it is to look out for useful gifts; and when they have reason to hope that they discover some appearance thereof in any, they should move such to the trial of their gifts; or the person, whose mind is impressed, may offer himself, 1 Tim. iii. 1.

4. If, after any one has been on trial some time, the appearances are promising, the church ought to give him a letter of license,⁴ for the exercise of his gifts abroad, his encouragement and further

³ If they are called Preachers but once, yet we read of preach, preaching, preached, preaches, and preacheth, about 140 times, and these imply a Preacher.

⁴ To all people, to whom these presents shall come; The Baptist church at _____ sendeth greeting. The bearer hereof, our beloved brother _____, being a man of good moral character, real piety, and sound knowledge of divine things; and having been called to exercise of his ministerial gifts, whereof we have now had considerable trial, both in private and public; we have judged him worthy; and do thereof hereby license and authorise him to

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improvement, and to obtain the opinion of others concerning his gifts. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," 1 Tim. v. 22.

5. After he has been on trial a longer or shorter time, according to circumstances, the church should proceed to invest him more fully with, and confirm him in, the ministerial office, by ordination.

6. The essence of ordination consists in the call of the church, in their voting in his favour, and designating him by said vote to the ministerial work, which power it was necessary should be lodged somewhere, with a view to maintain order; that no person who deems himself called and qualified for the office, might enter upon it without the approbation of others, and this power was lodged in the church. But nevertheless, it is expedient and necessary, in order to give the designation weight and solemnity, that there should be a public and formal procedure, when we instate a person in the ministerial office, Luke x. 1. Acts xiv. 23. Mark iii. 14.

7. For this purpose, having called one or more ministers to their assistance, and all met fasting, a sermon should be preached suited to the occasion. Then, after seeing the person's licence, and the vote for his ordination, one of the ministers should interrogate him respecting his call of God, his motives, his doctrinal knowledge, his soundness in the faith, and his resolution to persevere with diligence. Having given satisfaction, he is desired to kneel, and the ministers present lay their hands on his head, accompanied with suitable words, and one prays. Then he rises up, and they address him in terms of congratulation, bid him a welcome to take part with them of the holy ministry, and give him the right hand of fellowship. After this a charge is delivered, and prayer with singing, having been introduced in their proper places through the whole, a benediction closes the solemnity. "With the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, or eldership," 1 Tim. iv. 14. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting," Acts xiv. 23. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," 1 Tim. v. 22.

8. The ministers ought to give him a certificate of his ordination.⁵

9. We should now proceed to treat of the duties of the ministerial office. But although a person, in virtue of his ordination is fully instated in the office, and has a right to discharge every part of it, when called thereto, yet while he remains only a teacher or preacher, and is not connected with any church as their pastor or minister, he can have but little to do besides preaching. It will therefore be proper to defer the consideration of the duties of the pastoral office, until we have treated of his acquiring that title, by means of taking the oversight of some church, which will much enlarge his sphere of action.

preach the Gospel wherever he may have a call; not doubting, but that in due time circumstances will lead on to a more full investiture of him in the ministerial office, by ordination. In the mean time, we recommend him to favour and respect, praying the Lord may be with, and abundantly bless him.

Done at our meeting at _____.

⁵ To all people, on whom these presents shall come, the subscribers send greeting. – Being convened at _____ of _____ 1789, at the instance of the Baptist church of _____ aforesaid, for the purpose of setting apart, by solemn ordination the bearer hereof, to the sacred office of the ministry; and being, by sufficient testimonials, fully certified of his moral character, real piety, and sound knowledge of divine things, as well as ministerial gifts and abilities, whereof we had otherwise due knowledge: WE DID THEREFORE, on the said _____ day of _____ in the presence of said church, and a full assembly met, solemnly ordain and set apart, to the said sacred office of the ministry, by imposition of hands, prayer, and other rituals among us in that case in use, the said bearer, our worthy and reverend brother _____ whom we therefore recommend, as such, to favour and respect.

CHAPTER III.

*Of Deacons.*⁶

1. The business of deacons originally, in the church of Jerusalem, was very extensive, for the church consisted of thousands, and had all things in common, Acts ii. 41-44. iv. 32. v. 14. But, through a change of circumstances in the church, their work is now brought to a less compass.

2. They are to take charge of the outward concerns of the church, particularly to serve tables, Acts vi. 2, 3. The Lord's Table, 1 Cor. x. 21. that of the poor, and the minister's table. They are therefore to see, that the members of the church contribute to all necessary uses, according to their abilities, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. 2 Cor. ix. 7.

3. Their qualifications are set down in Acts vi. 3. 1 Tim. iii. 8-13.

4. The manner of executing their office is with impartiality or simplicity, cheerfulness, compassion, tenderness, and faithfulness, Rom. xii. 8.

5. They are to be set in the office by ordination, much after the same manner as ministers, Acts. vi. 3-6.

6. By the faithful discharge of their office, they purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith, 1 Tim. iii. 13.

CHAPTER IV.

Of Ruling Elders.

1. Concerning the divine right of the office of ruling elders, there has been considerable doubt and much disputation. We, therefore, had a thought of passing it over in silence; but, on farther consideration, concluded to state briefly the arguments on both sides, then subjoin a few general observations, and so let the churches judge for themselves, and practice as they shall see fit.

2. The Scriptures usually adduced to prove the right are the following:

[1.] He that ruleth let him do it with diligence, Rom. 12. 8.

[2.] God has set in the church governments, 1 Cor. xii. 28.

[3.] Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine, 1 Tim. v. 17.

[4.] Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

From the two first Scriptures it is argued, that the ruler mentioned must be an officer, because he is mentioned with the other officers, and in contradistinction from them.

And from the last two it is observed, that there must be two kinds of elders, one that rules only, and another who, besides ruling, does also labour in word and doctrine.

3. But it is objected,

[1.] that there is nothing in the two first Scriptures but may be accommodated to ministers.

2. That the two last may mean the same officer, i.e. a minister, who is said to be worthy of double honour, especially if he *labours* in his work.

3. There is no description given of the qualifications of persons for the office of ruling elders, as there is of bishops and deacons.

⁶ Since the word Διακονος is commonly rendered *minister* (as per note, page 11.) and as these officers are not called deacons in Acts vi. it should seem as if the application of Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 8, 12. to those officers chiefly rests on tradition.

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4. There are no directions how they are to be put in the office.

5. It would seem there were no such officers in the church of Ephesus, Acts xx. 19, 28. and of Philippi, Phil. i. 1. nor in those of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. 1 Pet. i. 1. compared with Chap. vi.i. ii.

The observations meant to make are these:

1. It must be confessed there are some appearances in Scripture favourable to the office.

2. If there were none it would stand on a footing with some other things left to human prudence.

3. There is the same necessity for the office, as for that of a deacon, namely, to ease the minister of part of his burden.

4. By means of the office, the minister may avoid some hard thoughts and ill-will, which is very desirable.

5. It is of material advantage to a church, to have at least one among them, capable of bringing matters forward, stating them clearly for consideration, summing up the arguments on both sides in order for a vote, and presiding and maintaining order through the whole.

6. All ministers have not a turn or talents for it, in the degree that might be wished.

7. Some that are not ministers have, in a good degree.

8. Appointing such to this service, will not only invite them to come forward by making it their business, but will also give them a more particular right, and enable them to do more good, by cloathing them with a measure of authority.

CHAPTER V.

Of Settling a Minister.

1. A Person having been regularly ordained a minister of the gospel, as we have seen in Chap. II. he is qualified to become a pastor or minister of any destitute church.

2. This is done in consequence of a call and invitation of some church, and his accepting of the call on the terms proposed, or such as they may agree upon. Calling of him to preach, ordaining of him, and his being even a member of said church, is not sufficient. There ought to be a mutual agreement between him and the church, whereby he becomes theirs, and they his. Col. i. 7.

3. How unanimous the church ought to be in the choice of settlement of a minister, it may be hard to say. On the one hand, a bare, or even a large majority, will not be sufficient, while, on the other hand, an unanimous vote may not always be obtained, and, perhaps, in some cases, may not be absolutely necessary. The more unanimous, however, the better.

4. The congregation also is not to be neglected in this business. For, as their good is to be kept in view, and as part of the support is expected to come from them, it ought to be known, that the person proposed to be settled gives pretty general satisfaction. 1 Tim. iii. 7. 3 John 12.

5. In settling a minister, having appointed a time and place, and invited a council from one or two of the neighbouring churches to assist, and to witness the transaction, one of the ministers, after praying and singing, should preach a suitable sermon. Then he, or another of the council, is to put such questions to the minister to be settled, and to the representative of the church appointed for that purpose, as will draw from each of them promises to fulfil their respective parts of the covenant and agreement between them, upon which he pronounces him, in the presence of god and of the whole assembly, to be the pastor and overseer of that church, and said church to be his flock and charge. Then

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the settled minister and representative of the church give each other the right hand of fellowship, with expressions of mutual joy and congratulation.

6. After this a charge should be delivered to the settled minister, Col. iv. 19. and his church; and then, prayer, singing, and a benediction, will close the service.

7. The transactions of the day, and particularly the terms of agreement between the settled minister and the church, should be entered at large on the records of the church.

8. Some may say, that so much formality in the business, with witnesses, is unnecessary, and that a private agreement between the parties is sufficient. But as a public form of marriage is indispensable; so the above is expedient and useful, as might be shewn were it necessary.

9. The duties incumbent on the pastor of a church, are many and great, and blessed is he who is found faithful therein.

10. He is to exercise love, care, tenderness, watchfulness, and diligence, in all the duties of going before, feeding and defending the flock, the sheep and the lambs, the strong, the weak and diseased, John xxi. 15, 17. Acts xx. 29. 1 Pet. v. 2. Jer. iii. 15. He is to preach in season and out of season – attend funerals – administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper⁷ - take the lead in church government – visit the flock – particularly the sick – pray for and with them – catechise the young, and defend the faith: besides the duties of the closet, of the study, and his frequent calls abroad, to visit and supply the destitute, settle differences, attend at ordinations, associations, &c. &c.

“And who is sufficient for these things,” 2 Cor. ii. 16.

CHAPTER VI.

Of dissolving the Connection between a Pastor and his Church.

1. The connection between a pastor and his church is very binding, not unlike that between man and wife, and like that, it should not be dissolved for every cause.

2. A manifest and material breach, however, of the contract between them, will justify a separation.

3. To which we may add one cause more; i.e. when variance, disagreement, animosity, and ill-will, take place between them, or between him and many of them, to such a degree as to preclude a rational prospect of his future usefulness among them.⁸

4. In this case it will not be very material, as to the separation, who may be to blame. Nor will a majority, even a pretty large one, in the minister's favour, make it prudent for him to continue, any more than it would justify his first settlement, among them, Acts 22, 18.

5. As a pastor in such circumstances ought not to stay among them in support of a party, so neither ought he to run away from them, nor yet should they use harsh measures with him: but matters of difference ought to be first accommodated in the best manner they can, that they may part in love so far as may be.

6. For this purpose, it will be necessary to call a council from a neighbouring church or churches, the very same, if they can be had, as were witnesses of the settlement.

⁷ It has been thought by some, that a minister cannot warrantably administer the ordinance of the Lord's supper in or to a church, where he is not a member and settled. But why he may not do it occasionally, as persons are admitted to occasional communion, where they are not members, it is hard to say, when he has the call of the church to do it. It should seem that the call of the church to an occasional act, must be equivalent to its call to stated acts.

⁸ See Joshua Thomas's History of the Baptists in Wales, p. 169.

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7. At this meeting, peace and accommodation of all matters of variance should be laboured after, that the pastor may be dismissed and recommended in as respectful a manner as circumstances will admit, in order that his character may not suffer abroad more than need be, nor his usefulness elsewhere be prevented.

8. Should the church prove refractory, and in their ill-humour, refuse to give the pastor such a character and dismissal as he deserves, the council may and ought to give him, from under their hands, a brief statement of matters in variance, together with their opinion, and such a recommendation as they can answer for to God and their own consciences.

9. If convenient, public worship may close the meeting.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the Duties of Members to their Pastors.

1. The members of churches owe all their duties in a way of obedience to the will of God revealed in his word.

2. These are to be performed in love to our Lord Jesus Christ, John xiv. 15. who is the great prophet, priest, and king of his church, unto whom all power in heaven and earth is given, Matt. xxviii. 18. our law-giver, Is. xxxiii. 22. the head of his church, Eph. i. 22. and who is to be honoured, John v. 23. and obeyed in all things as God over all, blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5.

3. All church members, therefore, are under the strictest obligations to do and observe whatsoever Christ has enjoined on them, in particular the duties they owe to their ministers.

4. They ought to pray for them, that God would assist them in and bless their labours, Eph. vi. 19. Col. iv. 3. 1 Thes. v. 25. 2 Thes. iii. 1. Heb. xiii. 18. and that he would support them under all their trials and afflictions, 2 Thes. iii. 2.

5. They ought to obey them in the exercise of every part of their official authority, according to the word, Heb. xiii. 17.

6. They ought to treat them with respect and esteem, 1 Tim. vi. 17. 1 Thes. v. 12, 13. Phil. ii. 29. Gal iv. 15. 3 John ix. 10.

7. They ought to stand by them in their trials, afflictions, and sufferings, 2 Tim. i. 15. iv. 16. 1 Cor. xvi. 10. 1 Tim. v. 19.

8. They ought to contribute towards their maintenance, that they may apply themselves to the extensive duties of their office, Acts vi. 2, 4. See Confession of Faith, chap. xxvii. § 10.

9. Pastors of churches have a divine right to their support, if the church is able to give it without being oppressed, or so far as they are able, than which nothing is more manifest in the New Testament. "For the workman is worthy of his meat," Matt. x. 10. Luke x. 7. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" 1 Cor. ix. 11. "Do ye not know, that they who minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? Even so has the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things," Gal. vi. 6. See 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.

10. These passages of holy writ are so unequivocal and express, that no one can evade their force.

11. Mr. Hooker well observes, that "they, who will not pay their ministers, would not pay any one his due, could they refuse with the same temporal impunity." Every one knows, that those, who will not do justice, farther than the law compels them, are destitute of an honest principle.

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12. Nothing but ignorance of his duty, or covetousness and want of principle, or both, can induce to neglect or refuse paying; and a covetous brother should be expelled the church, and kept no company with, 1 Cor. v. 11.

13. When a people neglect their duty in regard to the support of their minister, they are not only willful neglecters of the divine law, but must otherwise be great losers, both as they forfeit a right to the divine blessing, as also because their minister will be less capable of, and prevented from, serving them to the same advantage, Gal. vi. 6, 7. 2 Cor. ix. 6-8.

14. This support of the minister should not be done in the way of charity, or alms, but as a matter of right; and, if the people are able, it ought to exceed his bare necessity, that he may be able to be exemplary in acts of hospitality, 1 Tim. iii. 2.

15. If any church and congregation are not able to give their minister a comfortable support, but are willing to do what they can towards it, it will perhaps be duty, at least very commendable, in the minister, to forgo a part of his right, rather than leave them, and apply himself to some business to make up their deficiency, 1 Cor. ix. 22.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Duties of Members towards each other.

The principal of these are the following:

1. Love one another, John xii. 34, 35. xv. 12, 17. Rom. xii. 9, 10. xiii. 8-10. Gal. v. 15. 1 Pet. i. 22.

2. Avoid every thing that tends to cool love, and make disagreeable impressions, Gal. v. 26. In order to this, they should avoid whispering and backbiting, 2 Cor. xii. 20. Evil speaking and surmising, James iv. 11. 1 Tim. vi. 4. tattling and being busybodies, 1 Tim. v. 13.

3. No one should indulge shyness in himself towards another, but immediately make known to the other his grievance and suspicion: and when he discovers shyness in another, he should inquire after the reason of it, Matt. v. 23, 24. Eph. iv. 26.

4. Bear with one another, Matt. xviii. 21, 22. Rom. xv. 1. Gal. vi. 2.

5. Promote peace and harmony, Eph. iv. 3. Rom. xiv. 19. 1 Thes. v. 13.

6. Advance one another's spiritual benefit and edification, 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

7. Watch over one another for good, and admonish one another, when occasion requires, but in much love and tenderness, Rom. xv. 14. 2 Thes. iii. 15.

8. Exhort and stir up one another to a diligent attendance on the means of grace, Heb. x. 25. Acts ii. 42.

9. Stir up one another to zeal in holy living, and in supporting the gospel.

10. Should not divulge what is done in church meetings, Cat. iv. 12. It is a shame to divulge the secrets of a family, much more those of a church.

11. Relieve the necessities of the poor, Matt. xxv. 40. John xii. 8. Rom. xii. 13. xv. 26. Gal. ii. 10. Deut. xv. 7, 11. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. 1 John iii. 17. There is no good reason, however, can be given, why a church should refuse the assistance, which the good and wholesome laws of the land offer: But the deacons ought to agree with the overseer of the poor at so much a year, and then find a place near the meeting house, where they will be taken good care of and live comfortably, and if the deacon must give more than he receives from the overseer, let the church make up the difference.

12. The church should also assist such as are not so helpless or needy as to be put on the town, yet may stand in need of assistance at times, especially when some accidents have befallen them.

13. In the last place they should not go to law with one another, if matters can be accommodated in the church, or by reference, 1 Cor. vi. 1-7. It is true, the circumstances of the church

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being so materially altered now, from what they were in the apostolic day, may be thought to render the reason of the injunction in the above text less forcible; yet the mode of reference is at any time more eligible, not only from prudential considerations, but as being more friendly and kind, and, in some instances, more just. or, although the law always has justice in view, yet justice is not always within its reach, of which a christian should never take advantage against any one, not to say a brother. But by leave of the church, recourse may be had to the civil law.

CHAPTER IX.

Of Admission of Members.

1. We have already observed, p. 10. that every particular church has full power and authority, to transact all its own affairs, for its well being, independent of any other church, or combination of churches.

2. The chief part of church power, exercised under Christ, and according to the rules of the gospel, is versant about four things; the choice of their own officers, the admission of members, governing of them, and finally their exclusion, when they prove unworthy of a place in the house of God. Rom. xiv. 1. Acts ii. 41. 1 Cor. v. 13.

3. Admission is either out of the world, or from other churches.

4. When persons are wrought upon and turned to the Lord, under a real work of conviction and conversion, it will be their duty to offer themselves for baptism, and give themselves members of some gospel church, that may be near them, with whom they may walk in fellowship, and enjoy the privileges of the house of God, appointed for their nourishment and growth in grace. Acts ii. 38. Isaiah xliv. 5-lvi. 6. 2 Cor. viii. 5.

5. To this end, it will be proper for the candidate to acquaint the minister or pastor beforehand of his design, which is commonly done, that the minister, after conversing freely with him, may either encourage or discourage.

6. There is no doubt, but that every gospel minister has a right, in virtue of the commission, to baptize all such meet subjects, as apply to him for baptism, and afterward the church may receive them on the testimony of said minister, or on their giving in their religious experience.

7. But, since the church has a right to obtain full knowledge of the experience, religious principles, and moral conduct of those, that offer themselves for membership; and forasmuch as it is edifying, and tends to excite and encrease christian fellowship, to hear persons declare what the Lord has done for them, Psalm lxvi. 16. and also, as it may be of use to administer the holy ordinance of Baptism in a more open and public way; it will be better for persons to be examined in the first instance before the church, either on the day of preparation before communion, or at any other time, and then baptised.

8. The prerequisites for baptism and admission into the church are, godly experience, soundness in the faith, and a regular life.

9. Knowledge of the first will be best obtained, by letting persons declare, in their own way, the gracious dealings of the Lord with them, such questions being put occasionally as will assist and lead them on. 1. Peter iii. 15. The second should be confined to the essentials of religion. Rom. xiv. 1. xv. 7. And we attend to the last, as the necessary fruit, without which, their pretension to religion must be vain. Titus ii. 12, 14. iii. 8.

10. In admitting persons to baptism and then into the church, all precaution should be attended to, and carefulness used, that we open not the doors too wide on the one hand, nor on the other keep them too close. Zech. iv. 10. Matt. xii. 20. Isaiah xxvi. 1-6. Particularly, when they give in their religious

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experience, seek to discover, whether they have been convinced of righteousness, as well as of sin; whether they have only felt the power of the law, or have also discovered the glory of the gospel. John xvi. 8.

11. When the church is pretty generally satisfied with the parties' confession and conversation, they are, after being baptized, to be received into the church as members.

12. in doing this, the Minister, after a brief introduction, enquires whether they will watch and be watched over, give and receive admonition and reproof as occasion may require, keep their places in the church, contribute according to their abilities towards all necessary uses, and in all things walk in a professed and willing subjection to the commands and institutions of Christ in the gospel: the which having promised he gives them the right hand of fellowship, bids them a welcome among the disciples, prays, and gives out a suitable Hymn. 2 Cor. viii. 5. Acts. ii. 41. 2 Cor. vi. 14. Those who practice laying on of hands will know when to introduce it.

13. If the case of the applicant be pretty doubtful, his baptism, and consequently admission, had better be deferred: but this should be done with much tenderness and suitable encouragement, when there are some hopeful appearances.

14. Persons are sometimes admitted from other churches to transient and occasional communion, without transferring their membership, and this may be done without letters of recommendation, when they are known, but not otherwise. Acts xviii. 27. Rom. xvi. 1, 2. Col. iv. 10.

15. When any member's residence is in providence removed to a distance from the church whereof he is a member, and more convenient to attend with another church of the same faith, he ought to apply to the church of which he is a member, for a letter recommendatory and dismissive to the church more contiguous to him, and the church whereof he is a member ought to give him such a letter, if he is in good standing among them, directed to the church to which he is dismissed, and said church ought to receive him, unless they should have good reason to refuse. Rom. xvi. 1. Acts ix. 26, 27. xviii. 27.

16. It is a good general rule, that persons ought to be members of such churches as are nearest to them; for they cannot otherwise so well enjoy the benefit of membership, nor perform the duties, that arise out of church relation.

17. There may be however cases, that will make against this rule, particularly when persons plead greater benefit to themselves, in a church more remote; and they ought to be attended to, provided the other church be not too remote; for edification is the first object of church relation, and their entering into the relation at first was a voluntary act; nor should a church be made a prison of, wherein to confine people against their will.

18. It is certain there can be no dismissal to the world; and it is doubted, whether it would be regular for a church to dismiss to another church, with which it can hold no communion: but in this case, it may give a few lines signifying the person's character and standing with them.

19. When a person offers, who is a member of a church differing in faith and order, then, satisfaction is to be required touching the points in difference.

CHAPTER X.

Of Church Censures.

1. Church censures are properly but two; admonition or rebuke, and excommunication; for suspension in most cases, is rather a delay or postponement of censure.

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2. Admonition and rebuke are nearly synonymous. The first is of the nature of advice, entreaty, warning, 1 Cor. x. 11. Acts xxvii. 9. 2 Thes. iii. 15. 1 Tim. v. 1. Tit. iii. 10. The other carries in it more of reprehension, severity, and authority, Levit. xix. 17. Luke xix. 39. 2 Tim. iv. 2. Tit. ii. 15.

3. Admonition or rebuke is either private or public.

4. Private admonition is when the offence, whether against God, or more especially against a particular person, is private and not much known, Rom. xv. 14. Luke xvii. 3.

5. In this case, the offended brother is not to divulge the matter, but to go to the offender, and endeavour in a tender, friendly manner, to convince and reclaim his brother. If he succeeds, and the offending brother shews signs of repentance, and promises amendment, the matter is to end there. But if not, the offended brother is to take one or two of the brethren with him, such as he shall judge most likely to gain on his brother. If this admonition should take no effect, the matter is to be brought before the church, Matt. xviii. 15-17.

6. This rule holds good, let the offence be of ever so heinous a nature, provided it be private.

7. When it is brought before the church, after the charge is proved, should he deny it, the minister is to admonish, and endeavour in the spirit of meekness to reclaim the offender, 1 Tim. v. 20. Tit. i. 13. Should this prove ineffectual, and the offender continue obstinate and impertinent, the church is to proceed to higher acts of censure, and, in some cases, if he is penitent, as we shall see in the 16th verse, Matt. xviii. 17.

8. Should any private matter be brought into the church, before the previous steps have been taken, the person that brings it in ought to be severely reprov'd and admonish'd, and that publicly before the church, for his irregular and injurious conduct therein: yet nevertheless, the church must now take it in hand, forasmuch as it will then be no longer private, but will require public satisfaction.

9. Public admonition or rebuke also takes place in regard to public offences, of a less heinous nature, but unseemly in christians, and unworthy of their vocation, Rom. xiv. 22. Matt. v. 22. 1 Cor. viii. 12.

10. Suspension is to be used, when a person, under the first admonition or rebuke in the church, proves incorrigible. For, since there is to be a second admonition, Titus iii. 10, he ought, while we are waiting to see the effect of the first, to be put under suspension, and debarred the privileges of the church, Rev. ii. 21.

11. When a charge is brought into the church against a person, if he denies it, and witnesses are not at hand, or some other circumstances make it inconvenient for the present to discuss the matter, it will be necessary to lay him, in the mean time, under suspension from the Lord's table, until the matter can come to a hearing, Lev. Chapters XIII, XIV.

12. Suspension is also used, when the offence is not sufficiently great, or is not yet ripe for the great sentence of excommunication. Such is not to be accounted as an enemy, but to be exhorted as a brother; in union, though not in communion. 2 Thes. iii. 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15.

13. To the above three cases, wherein suspension is to take place, we may add a fourth, and that is, when a person is called in question for some high misdemeanor, for which he ought to be excommunicated, it is thought, that if there are strong signs of genuine repentance, the infliction of the sentence ought to be dispensed with, yet nevertheless, the guilty person ought to be suspended from communion for a time, as a testimony of the church's indignation against every species of wickedness, and in vindication of the honour and glory of God. Thus the Lord appointed concerning Miriam, that she should shut out of the camp seven days, and then received in again, Numb. xii. 14, 15.

14. The last and highest act of church censure is excommunication, to which recourse must be had, when previous censures have not their due effect, in bringing persons dealt with to repentance,

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provided the matters for which they are under dealing, with the circumstances of aggravation during the course of said dealing, manifestly involve immorality or heresy.⁹

15. Acts of immorality include not only the particulars of the Decalogue, but also the commands, appointments, institutions, and ordinances contained in the New Testament: for a breach of any positive injunction, or requirement of divine authority, must involve in it a breach of morality.

16. There should be care taken, however, not to make forced constructions of implicit immorality, as for instance, to charge a person with transgressing the rule in Heb. x. 25. and breach of covenant, because he neglects his place, attends worship elsewhere, and perhaps with those of a different persuasion, but pleads greater edification, and perhaps, conscience,¹⁰ least we should act the part of Diotrephes. 3 John x.

17. When a member is found guilty of some gross act of immorality, and which is notorious and scandalous, the church should proceed to this censure in the first place, without the previous steps of admonition and reproof, in order to vindicate the credit of their holy profession, and to manifest their abhorrence of such abomination, 1 Cor. v. 1, 2, 7, 13. 1 Tim. vi. 24.

18. Such as are heretical in their principles, denying some essential doctrine, or holding and teaching such as may be unfound and scandalous, come under the notice of this ordinance, Ga. i. 6, 7. compared with Chap. V. 12. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. vi. 3-5. 2 Tim. ii. 16-18. Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20. 2 Cor. ii. 6.

19. The charge being sufficiently proved in the opinion of the church, and they having determined on the person's exclusion, and set the time for that purpose, the minister is to lay open the heinousness of the crime, with the aggravating circumstances thereof, and the scandal such an one is become to religion; he is to apply the particular places of scripture, that may be pertinent to the case, in order to charge the offence home of the conscience of the offender, if present, and that others also may fear; he is to open the nature and end of the censure, expressing the solemn sense of himself and church on this awful occasion; and then he is, in the presence of the church, to cut off and seclude such an offender by name from the union and communion of the church, so that he is not, henceforth to be looked upon, deemed or accounted a brother, or a member of such a church, until God shall restore him again by repentance, for which they pray.

20. This exclusion is an authoritative putting of such a person out of the church, to keep it pure, and in order to his being humbled and broken under a sight and sense of his sins, and where there are signs of this he ought to be restored, 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8.

21. When a person about to be excommunicated judges himself aggrieved by party influence or otherwise, he has a right to insist on a council being called from a neighbouring church or churches, and the church ought to agree to it, and allow him the choice of one half of the council.

22. If the church should refuse to call in a council, and cut the person off, or should they do it contrary to the advice of the council, the person aggrieved may lay a statement of his case before the Association, who may appoint a council, and if the church should refuse to admit of a rehearsing before said council, the Association may bring said church under dealing, and, if the church continues obstinate, a neighbouring church may receive the aggrieved person into their communion.¹¹

23. In transacting church business, it is not to be expected that unanimity will always prevail: Some will, at times, be in the minority. These have sometimes taken offence, and declined keeping their places in the church for a while. This is very wrong and irregular. For suppose a church does ever so wrong, yet any individual, after bearing his testimony against it, has done his duty, and cleared his conscience, and ought therefore to keep his place, except in case of material defection from the faith. It

⁹ It is thought that Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. 3, 5. refer not to excommunication.

¹⁰ See Dr. Owen on the nature of a Gospel Church, p. 109, 225.

¹¹ See the Confession of Faith, Chap. XXVII. § 15. Also Keach's Glory of a true Church, p. 18.

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has been thought by good men, that our Lord communed with Judas, though he knew at the time what he was.

24. Although a church may refuse a person when he offers for membership, if they have good cause to suspect, that he is not truly religious, yet they have no right to exclude him afterward, upon the like suspicion. They may at first judge in his favour, but cannot afterwards reverse the sentence. Excommunication is only for immorality or heresy. As for their dying away, or seeming to die away in religion, the rule is, "Let them grow together until the harvest," Matt. xiii. 30.

25. There ought to be meetings of business every month, two months, or quarterly, and not do all their business on days of preparation, lest something should happen, that might discompose the minds of some, and so unfit them for the holy communion next day.

26. Every church should keep a book of records, and enter therein all their transactions, that it may at any time afterwards be known, what was done and how it was done.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the Fellowship and Communion of Churches.

1. Churches of the same faith and gospel order, so far as is necessary to communion; as they have all drank into and of one and the same spirit; as they are branches of one and the same body, and hold to one and the same head; and as they have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism: they therefore may, and ought to have and enjoy fellowship and a friendly intercourse together, as occasion may require and opportunity serve, in the discharge of those relative duties, which may tend to the mutual benefit and edification of the whole. 1 Cor. xii. 13. Eph. iv. 5. John xvii. 20-26. To mention a few.

2. They should be ready to assist one another, when required, in difficult cases.

3. Such as have ministerial gifts to spare, should be ready and willing to supply such as may be destitute. Cant. viii. 8.

4. Admit one another's Members, of regular standing, to transient communion, when opportunity may serve.

5. Dismiss and receive members to and from one another.

6. They should assist one another with money, as well as advice, if need be, and in general perform all the acts of kindness towards each other, as neighbouring, though distinct families or branches of the one great family and household of faith.

7. And lastly, they have fellowship and communion together, for their mutual benefit, in the social duties of an association.

CHAPTER XII.

Of an Association.

1. An Association consists of delegates, or Messengers from different particular churches, who have agreed to associate together, at stated times, to promote their own interest, and the good of the common cause.

2. This practice is recommended by the reason of things, the spirit of religion, and apostolic practices, Acts xv.

3. The meeting thus of churches by their delegates is of special use; to gain acquaintance with, and knowledge of one another – to preserve uniformity in faith and practice, Phil. iii. 16. – to detect and

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discountenance heresies – to curb licentiousness in the wanton abuse of church power – to afford assistance and advice in all difficult cases – to contribute pecuniary aid when necessary – to make appointments of supplies for destitute churches – And every way advance and secure the interest of religion, and strengthen and draw closer the bonds of union and fellowship.

4. Other churches, besides those that enter at the original constitution, may be admitted, on making application, and giving satisfactory evidence in regard to their faith and practice, regular order and good standing.

5. The delegates thus assembled are, properly speaking only an advisory council. They are not armed with coercive power, to compel the churches to submit to their decisions, nor have they any controul over the acts or doings of the churches. Every church still remains independent.

6. Nevertheless, the associated body may exclude from their connection any church that may act an unworthy part. This our association did some years ago, as also, virtually, last association. Indeed it would be absurd to examine churches at their admission, if afterward they are to be continued in the connection, let their principles and practice be what they may, see Chap. X. ver. 22. vide also Confession of Faith, Chap. XXVII. § 15. Our late discipline, p. 61. Dr. Owen on the nature of a gospel church. p. 254.

7. Let it not be thought, that this power of the association over the churches in connection with it disannuls or destroys the independence of those churches: for if any church of the associated body should become unsound in their principles, or act irregularly and disorderly, and will not do, what may be just and right; such a church will still remain an independent church, though an heterodox and irregular one; but it would be inconsistent and wrong in the association, to suffer such a church to continue among them, since, besides other confederations, they would hereby become partakers of their evil deeds. The association can take nothing from them, but what it gave them. This, in such circumstances, it certainly may and ought to do.

8. From what we have said, as well as from considering, that the union of churches in an association, is a voluntary act, a voluntary union or confederation, like the voluntary confederation of members into a church, it follows that every church stands in the same relation to its association, as a member does to his church, and therefore is examined in the same manner on admission. Hence

9. Complaints may be received by the association, against any church belonging to it, especially when the complaint is brought in by another church. Hence also,

10. The association has a right to call any delinquent church to account, whether for a wanton abuse of its power towards or over any of its members, neglect of attendance at the association, disregard of those things recommended to them, or any material defect in principle or practice; and if satisfactory reasons are not given therefor, nor reformation, then to exclude them.

11. At the first formation of an association, or afterwards, there should be a set of rules, conditions and regulations drawn up, as the ground on which the churches agree to associate together.

12. For the maintenance of good order, the associated body when met, should choose a Moderator, to regulate and bring forward what is to come before them, and to preside in their deliberations: as also, a Clerk, to take minutes of their proceedings.

THE END.