

A
S U M M A R Y
O F
CHURCH-DISCIPLINE,

S H E W I N G T H E
QUALIFICATIONS and DUTIES, of the Offi-
cers and Members, of a Gospel-Church.

B Y
The BAPTIST-ASSOCIATION,

I N
CHARLESTOWN, SOUTH CAROLINA.

*For this Cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in
Order the Things that are wanting. 2. c.
See that thou make all Things according to the pattern shewed
to thee in the Mount, Heb. viii. 5.*

~~65X22~~

W I L M I N G T O N,
PRINTED BY JAMES ADAMS,
M,DCC,LXXX,III.

T H E

BX 6340

.C5

P R E F A C E.

THE following Summary of Church-Discipline, being designed chiefly, for the Benefit of the Poor and Unlearned, is contracted into a very narrow Compass, and exhibited in the plainest Language. This, with whatever Defects it has, will require the Candor of the more learned and intelligent.

To remove, in some Measure, the Ignorance of but too many Church-Members, about Discipline, was the principal Motive for engaging in this Work.

We mean not to impose our Sentiments on any Person whatever, or to anathematize those who differ from us in Opinion. The Word of God, and no human Composition, is the Standard, by which our Principles and Conduct must be tried.

Nevertheless, we hope this small Piece may be of some Use, for the right understanding of God's Word, with regard to the
Source and Nature of Points

THE PREFACE.

Points treated on ; and we desire that the Scriptures referred to may be carefully consulted, to see whether these Things be true.

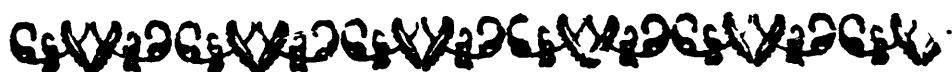
Some may say, " There is no Call for this Publication, seeing there is such a valuable Treatise on Church Discipline, published some Years ago by the Philadelphian-Association."

We mean not to depreciate the Value of that Piece ; it has merited much from the Baptist-Churches ; but it is out of print, and we apprehend not so explicit as this ; besides, some Things therein appear to us exceptionable. However, we have borrowed many Hints from it ; and are greatly indebted to the late learned ; pious and judicious Dr. Gill, for what is taken from his Exposition and Body of Divinity.

May the great Head of the Church bless this feeble Attempt to promote his Honour, and the Welfare of his Churches

I N D E X.

CHAP. I. <i>Of a true and orderly Gospel-Church.</i>	Page
SEC. 1. <i>The Definition of a Church</i>	1
2. <i>The Materials of a Church</i>	2
3. <i>The Constitution of a Church</i>	3
4. <i>The Power of a Church</i>	5
CHAP. II. <i>Of Church-Officers.</i>	
SEC. 1. <i>Ministers</i>	8
2. <i>Deacons</i>	12
CHAP. III. <i>Of receiving Persons to Church-Membership.</i>	
SEC. 1. <i>Their Qualifications</i>	16
2. <i>The Manner of Admission</i>	18
CHAP. IV. <i>Of the Duties incumbent on Church-Members.</i>	
SEC. 1. <i>Their Duty to their Minister</i>	23
2. <i>Their Duty to their Deacons</i>	25
3. <i>Their Duty to one another</i>	25
4. <i>Their Duty to the Church</i>	27
CHAP. V. <i>Of Church-Censures.</i>	
SEC. 1. <i>Concerning Rebuke</i>	29
2. <i>Concerning Suspension</i>	30
3. <i>Concerning Excommunication</i>	32
CHAP. VI. <i>Of the Association of Churches.</i>	



A
S U M M A R Y
O F
CHURCH-DISCIPLINE.

C H A P. I.

Of a true and orderly Gospel-Church.

§ 1. **G** O D in every Age hath had, has
and will have, a Church or Peo-
ple in the World, consisting of a great-
er or less Number, and subsisting under
various Forms and in diverse Circum-
stances, *Acts* 7. 38. *Eph.* 3. 21.

The catholic, or universal Church, con-
sidered collectively, forms one compleat
and glorious Body, *Cant.* 6. 9. called
Christ's mystical Body, of which he is the
Head, *Col.* 1. 18. *Eph.* 1. 22. This is

the general Assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in Heaven, *Heb.* 12. 23.

Under the Old Testament Dispensation, the Church was pretty much confined to Family or Nation ; but under the present Administration, Christ gathers to himself a People from among all Nations, *Matt.* 28. 19. 20. And being thus gathered, by the Power of Christ in the Gospel, it becomes their Duty to unite in distinct Churches, *Acts* 2. 41. 47. that they may walk together, *in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless*. Hence we find that under the Gospel, Churches were settled wherever there was a sufficient Number of Converts for that Purpose, *Rev.* 2d & 3d Chapters.

A particular Gospel-Church, consists of a Company of Saints, incorporated by a special Covenant, into one distinct Body, and meeting together in one Place, for the Enjoyment of Fellowship with each other, and with Christ their Head in all his Institutions, to their mutual Edification, and the Glory of God through the Spirit, *2 Cor.* 8. 5. *Acts* 2. 1.

§ 2. The Temple of the Lord, is not
to

to be built with dead, but living Materials, 1 *Pet.* 2. 5. None have a Right to Church-Membership, but such as Christ will own as his sincere followers, at the last decisive Day, whatever Pretensions they may make to an Interest in his Favour. *Mat.* 7. 22, 23. Except a Man be born again, he has no Right to enter into the Kingdom of God, or into a Gospel-Church, *John* 3. 3. Christ is a living Head, and will have none but living Members, in his mystical Body, *John* 15. 6.

§ 3. The Constitution of Churches, is plainly supposed, *Acts* 2. 24. *Mat.* 18. 17. &c. and it is necessary, in order that the Disciples of Christ may enjoy the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which is a Church-Ordinance, watch over one another, warn the unruly, and lay Censures on disorderly and impenitent Persons.

The Scriptures do not absolutely determine, the Number of Persons necessary to constitute a Church; but as our Lord has said, *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them*, *Mat.* 18. 20. it should seem as if that Number of godly Persons might,
at

at least in some urgent Cases, form a Church *essential*, though not a Church *complete*, or duly organized, for lack of Officers. Experience has sometimes proved, that such small Beginnings have been succeeded with a large Increase, consistent with that encouraging Promise, *Isa.* 60 22. a little one shall become a Thousand, and a small one a strong Nation.

A Gospel-Church is not national, but congregational. This was evidently the Case in the apostolic Age; hence *Paul* sent a general Epistle to the several Churches in *Galatia*, *Gal.* 1. 1, 2. and our Lord himself ordered Epistles to be wrote to the seven distinct Churches in *Asia*, *Rev.* 2d & 3d Chapters.

With regard to the Manner of constituting a Church, it must be by the Consent, and Desire of the Parties concerned: And it will be expedient, to call in a Minister or Ministers, if to be had, to assist on that important Occasion. The Parties being met, fasting, the Solemnity ought to be opened by fervent Prayer to God, *Phil.* 4. 6. next a Sermon suitable to the Occasion should be preached; and then, for the mutual Satisfaction of every Individual,

vidual, a strict Inquiry should be made, into their Experience of a Work of Grace on their Hearts, their Soundness in the Doctrines of Faith, and the Goodness of their Lives and Conversations ; unless, as Members of Churches, they come honourably recommended for that Purpose. Being thus satisfied with each others Graces and Qualifications, and united in the Bond of Love, they should give up themselves to the Lord, and to one another by the Will of God, *2 Cor. 8. 5.* by subscribing a written Covenant, consistent with the Word of God, *Isa. 44. 5.* thereby binding and obliging themselves to be the Lord's, to walk in all his Commands and Ordinances, and in all Respects to behave towards each other as Brethren, agreeable to the spiritual Relation they now enter into.

Being thus united in one Body, under Christ their Head, they become and are to be deemed a Church essential, founded on the Gospel Plan. Let them then ratify their Engagements by a Participation of the Lord's Supper, and so conclude the Solemnity.

§ . A Church thus constituted has the
Keys,

Keys, or Power of Government, within itself, having Christ for its Head, and his Law for its Rule. It has the Power and Privilege of choosing its own Officers, *Acts* 6. 3. Chap. 13. 2. exercising its own Discipline, *Mat.* 18. 17. and of administering the Word and Ordinances, for the Edification and Comfort of its Members, *Acts* 2. 46. All which, with every other Act of Discipline, each distinct Church may exercise, without being subject to the Cognizance of any other Church, Presbytery, Synod, or Council whatever, *1 Cor.* 5. 12. *Mat.* 18. 17.

Churches being vested with such Power, ought to use it with Prudence ; lest they dishonour Christ and his Cause, or wound their fellow Members, *1 Cor.* 10. 31. *Rom.* 15. 2. To guard against which, Church Business should be debated deliberately, with Humility and Moderation ; that, if possible, the Members may be unanimous in all their Determinations. Nevertheless, when this Unanimity cannot be attained, a Majority of the male Members may determine, and the Minority ought peaceably to submit. This appears not only from the general Rule, *Eph.* 5. 21. *submitting*

mitting yourselves one to another in the Fear of God; but more clearly from 2 Cor. 2. 6. sufficient to such a Man is this Punishment, which was inflicted of *many*: Which many supposes a Majority; in the Original it is, (*upo trn plonon*) by the more, the greater, or major Part. Which plainly points out a Decision by a Majority.

Female Members may, when called upon, act as Witnesses in a Church; and when aggrieved are to make known their Case, either in Person or by a Brother; and must have a proper Regard paid them: But they are excluded from all Share of Rule, or Government in the Church, 1 Cor. 14. 34. 35. 1 Tim. 2. 11. 14.



C H A P. II.

Of Church-Officers.

THE ordinary Officers of the Church, and the only ones now existing, are Ministers and Deacons, *Phi.* 1. 1. In the first Gospel-Churches there were other Officers, such as Apostels, Prophets and Evangelists,

vangelists, *1 Cor.* 12. 28. *Eph.* 4. 11. who were endowed with extraordinary Gifts, which were then necessary for the Confirmation of the Gospel, but are since become extinct.

§ 1. Ministers of the Gospel, who are frequently called Elders, Bishops, Pastors and Teachers, are appointed by Christ to the highest Office in the Church; and therefore need peculiar Qualifications; such as are pointed out, *1 Tim.* 3. 2.---7. and *Tit.* 1. 5.---10.

As they have the Charge of Souls, and are Leaders in the House of God, Churches cannot be too careful in choosing Men to the Ministerial Function. They ought to be Men fearing God, being born again of the Spirit, sound in the Faith, and of blameless Lives and Conversations, as becometh the Gospel of Christ, having fervent Desires to glorify God, and save Souls, *John* 3. 10. *2 Tim.* 1. 13. *1 Tim.* 3. 2. *Rom.* 9. 3. Chap. 10. 1.

A Church having no Minister, should look among its own Members, and see if there be any who seem to have promising Gifts and Graces for that great Work. If such a one is found, he is to be put on
private

private Trial for a Season ; when, on finding him promising, and that they are edified by his preaching, they may call him to preach in publick. After which, if it should appear that his Rod, like *Aaron's*, buds, blossoms and bears Fruit, he is to be set apart by Ordination ; that he may perform every Part of the sacred Function, *Acts* 13. 2. 3. But should no such Person be found in the Church, it is the Duty of a Sister-Church, if possible, to supply them, *Cant.* 8. 8. And if a Person, who is a Member of another Church be approved, and he inclined to accept a Call from them, he must first become a Member with them, that so they may chuse him from among themselves, see *Acts* 1. 21. Thus were Deacons chosen, *Acts* 6. 3.

The Candidate having accepted the Call of the Church, they proceed to his Ordination ; which is to be done in the following Manner, *viz.* If there is not a sufficient Presbytery in the Church, neighbouring Elders are to be called and authorized to perform that Service. The Day is set apart by Fasting and Prayer, *Act* 13. 2. 3. Chap. 14. 23. The Elders [Ministers] being satisfied with regard to

B
the

the Gifts, Graces, Soundness of Principles, and becoming Life and Conversation of the Candidate; the Church being met, and giving their Suffrage for his Ordination, a Sermon is to be preached on the Occasion, and he declaring his Willingness and inward Call to take on him the sacred Office, *1 Cor. 9. 16.* a publick Confession of his Faith will be required; then the Ministers lay their Hands on his Head, and by Prayer set him apart to the great Work of the Ministry: This done, they give him the Right Hands of Fellowship, *Gal. 2. 9.* and then one of the Ministers publicly gives him a Charge, or Directory how to behave himself in the House of God, *2 Tim. 4. 5.* The Solemnity is concluded by Prayer, Singing and a Blessing on the whole Congregation.

A Minister, being ordained, has Authority from Christ to preach the Gospel, and baptize Believers in any Part of the World where God in his Providence may call him: But if he should be called unto, and accept the pastoral Charge of any particular Church, he will be more immediately confined to them, and they to him, *1 Pet. 5. 1, 2, 3.*

Per-

Persons thus commissioned, are to attend to their Work with all possible Engagedness, as it becomes those who have the Charge of Souls. They must give themselves up to Study, Prayer and Meditation, 1 *Tim.* 4. 14, 15, 16. that they may be Workmen who need not be ashamed, 2 *Tim.* 2. 15. They must be instant in Season and out of Season, preaching the pure Doctrines of the Gospel, 2 *Tim.* 1. 13. Chap. 4. 2. They are to feed the Lord's Flock with spiritual Bread, *Acts* 20. 28. to preach with the View of bringing Souls to Christ, and not for the Sake of Honour or *filthy Lucre*. They are not to lord it over God's Heritage, but to be patient and tender-hearted, 2 *Tim.* 2. 25. They are to watch over the Flock, to comfort the feeble-minded, 1 *Thess.* 5. 14. to sound the Alarm to the wicked and obstinate, *Ezek.* 3. 17, 18. and to set their Faces like Flints against Profaneness, and every Vice.

They should often visit the Flock committed to their Charge, to know the State of their Souls, that they may speak a Word in Season to them, catechise the Youths, instruct the ignorant, and pray with and
for

for them. They are especially to visit the Sick, and those who are otherways afflicted, *Ezek.* 34. 4.

They are to administer the Ordinances of the Gospel, in a strict Conformity to the Word of God, *Heb.* 8. 5. to preside in the Affairs of the Church, and see that strict Discipline is duly executed therein, *Heb.* 13. 7. 17. In a Word, they are to be Examples to the Flock, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity, 1 *Tim.* 4. 12.

§ 2. As it is the Duty of Ministers, more particularly to give themselves to Prayer, and to the Ministry of the Word, God has appointed Officers to be employed in the inferior Services of the Church, namely Deacons, whose Qualifications are pointed out, *Acts* 6. 3. and 1 *Tim.* 3. 8---13.

Deacons are likewise to be chosen by the Suffrage of the Church, from among its own Members ; and, being first proved, are to be set apart to that Office by Prayer and laying of Hands, *Acts* 6. 2.--6.

The Office of a Deacon is to relieve the Minister from the secular Concerns of the Church ; hence they are called *Helps*, 1 *Cor.*

Cor. 12. 28. Their Business is to serve Tables; as “ The Table of the Lord, by
“ providing the Bread and Wine for it;
“ receiving both from the Minister, when
“ blessed, and distributing them to the
“ Members; and collecting from them
“ for the Poor, and they defraying the
“ Charge; and observing what Members
“ are missing at the Ordinance, whom
“ they are to admonish; and if their Ad-
“ monitions are not regarded, to report
“ it to the Church: And they are like-
“ wise to serve the Minister’s Table, by
“ taking Care that he has a sufficient
“ Competency for his Support; and it
“ belongs to them to stir up the Mem-
“ bers of the Church, to their Duty in
“ communicating to him; and what they
“ receive of them, they are to apply to
“ his Use: And also, they are to serve
“ the Poor’s Table; to whom they are to
“ distribute of the Church’s Stock, with
“ all Impartiality, Simplicity, Chearful-
“ ness and Sympathy;” *Dr. Gill on Acts*
6. 2. By the faithful Discharge of their
Office they shall purchase to themselves a
good Degree, and great Boldness in the
Faith, *1 Tim.* 3. 13.

C H A P. III.

Of receiving Persons to Church-Membership.

A Church thus founded on the Scripture-Plan, ought to observe good Order, as in all other Cases, so also in the Admission of Members into their Community.

§ 1. Every well regulated Society requires Qualifications in its Members; much more should a Church of Jesus Christ be careful that none be admitted into its Communion, but such as are possessed of those Prerequisites pointed out in Scripture.

They must be truly gracious Persons. None are fit Materials of a Gospel-Church without having first experienced an entire Change of Nature, *Mat.* 18. 3. “ Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” By which is intended a *Gospel-Church-State*, as the Context clearly shews. To the same Purpose is *John* 3. 5. Christ’s Church

Church is a spiritual House, built up of lively Stones, *i. e.* of living Souls, *1 Pet.* 2. 5. By Nature we are dead in Trespases and Sins, and Christ doth not place such dead Materials in his spiritual Building. It is certain the *Ephesian* Church was not composed of such Materials, *Eph.* 2. 1. The Members of the Church at *Rome* were *the Called of Jesus Christ*, *Rom.* 1. 6. called out of Darkness into the Lord's marvelous Light. *1 Pet.* 2. 9. called to be Saints, *Rom.* 1. 17. as were the Members of the Church at *Corinth*, *1 Cor.* 1. 2. and the Churches in general are called *Churches of the Saints*, *1 Cor.* 14. 33. The Members of the Church at *Colosse* are denominated not only *Saints*, but *faithful Brethren in Christ*, *Col.* 1. 2. or true Believers in him : None but such have a Right to Ordinances : *Acts* 2. 37. without Faith none discern the Lord's Body in the Supper ; consequently must eat and drink unworthily, *1 Cor.* 11. 29. Indeed without Faith it is impossible to please God, *Heb.* 11. 6.

The Church of *England*, in her Articles, defines a Gospel-Church “ A Congregation of faithful Men, in which the pure
“ Word

“ Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered.” Of such faithful Men or Belivers in Christ, was the first Church at Jerusalem composed, *Acts* 2. 41. Chap. 5. 14. Those whom the Lord added to the Church were such as should be saved, *Acts* 2. 47. Let those look to it, who make the Church of Christ a Harlot, by opening the Door of Admission so wide as to suffer Unbelievers, unconverted and graceless Persons to croud into it without Controul.

They should be Persons of some competent Knowledge of divine and spiritual Things ; who have not only Knowledge of themselves, and of their lost State by Nature, and of the Way of Salvation by Christ ; but have some Degree of Knowledge of God in his Nature, Perfections, and Works ; and of Christ in his Person as the Son of God ; of his proper Deity ; of his Incarnation ; of his Offices, as Prophet, Priest and King ; of Justification by his Righteousness ; Pardon by his Blood ; Satisfaction by his Sacrifice ; and of his prevalent Intercession : And also of the Spirit of God ; his Person, Offices and Operations ; and of the important Truths of the Gospel, and Doctrines of Grace ;

or how otherwise should the Church be *the Pillar and Ground of Truth* ?

Their Lives and Conversations ought to be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ, *Pb. 1. 27.* that is, holy, just and upright, *Psa. 15. 1. 2.* If their Practice contradicts their Profession, they are not to be admitted to Church-Membership. Holiness becomes the Lord's House for ever, *Psa. 93. 5.*

They ought to be truly baptized in Water, *i. e.* by Immersion, upon a Profession of their Faith ; agreeable to the antient Practice of John the Baptist, and the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Matt. 3. 6. John 3. 23. Rom. 6. 4. Acts 8. 36.---38.* It is allowed by all that Baptism is essential to Church-Communion, and ought to precede it ; there is not one Instance in the Word of God of any being admitted without it ; the three thousand Penitents, after they had gladly received the Word, were baptized ; and then, and not before, were added to the Church ; so the first Church at *Samaria* consisted of Men and Women baptized by *Philip*, they believing what he said concerning the Kingdom of God : And *Lydia*, and her House-

Household, and the Jaylor and his, being baptized upon their Faith, laid the Foundation of the Church at *Philippi* : And the Church at *Corinth* was begun with Persons who hearing the Word believed, and were baptized ; and the Church at *Ephesus* was first formed by some Disciples baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus, *Acts* 2. 41. and 8. 12. and 16. 15. 33. and 18. 8. and 19. 5. So the Members of the Churches at *Rome*, *Galatia*, and *Colosse*, were baptized Persons, *Rom.* 6. 3. 4. *Gal.* 3. 27. *Col.* 2. 12.

§ 2. Persons, making Application, are to be admitted into the Communion of a Church, by the common Suffrage of its Members ; being first satisfied that they have the Qualifications, laid down in the preceding Section ; for which Purpose Candidates must come under Examination before the Church ; and if it should happen that they do not give Satisfaction, they should be set aside, until a more satisfactory Profession is made, *1 Tim.* 6. 12.

It may be that one or two of the Members of the Church, have conceived a Prejudice against a Person applying for Fellowship ; in this Case they are to be duly heard,

heard, and if their Objections are of sufficient Weight, the Candidate must be set aside ; if not, the Majority of Voices ought in all Reason to decide it.

When the Church concludes, that the Person applying for Membership may be admitted, the Minister is to acquaint him with the Rules and Orders of God's House ; and upon his promising, covenanting, and agreeing strictly to observe them, as assisted by the Spirit of God, the Minister, in Behalf of the Church, is to give him the Right Hand of Fellowship ; and to receive him as a Member, into Union and full Communion with that particular Church ; whereby he becomes intitled to all the Rights and Privileges thereof, *Col. 2. 19. Rom. 15. 7. 2 Cor. 8. 5.*

If a Member should desire transient or occasional Communion in any Church to which he doth not belong, if it be well known that he is an orderly Person, he may be admitted to the Lord's Table ; but should have nothing to do with the Government of the Church, unless his Advice and Assistance be asked. But a Person unknown should by no Means be admitted without a satisfactory Letter of Re-

A Summary of

Recommendation from the Church to which he belongs.

When a Member removes his Residence, nearer to another Church of the same Faith and Order, he is bound in Duty to procure a Letter of Dismissal from the Church he belongs to, *Acts* 18. 27. And the Church to which he is removed, is bound in duty to receive him into Union and full Communion ; unless it should appear that he is, either immoral in his Life, or unsound in his Principles. But let it be remembered, that he continues a Member of his own Church from whence he came, until he is received into the Church to which he is dismissed, *Act* 9. 26.--28. That it is the Duty of a Believer to give himself a Member of an orderly Church nearest to his Place of Residence, or which he can most conveniently attend to, appears plain from the following Considerations ; (1) by the Neglect of this Duty he will deprive himself of the Edification, Comfort, loving Instruction, watchful Care, and faithful Admonitions of his Fellow-Members ; (2) it would give Room to suspect he was impatient of that Restraint, which every humble Member deems his

his Mercy ; (3) it would seem as if he aimed at screening himself from necessary Contributions, or Church-Discipline ; (4) such a neglect casts a manifest Contempt on the Church and Ministry, near which he resides ; (5) was this conduct to be allowed, and become general, it would cause great Confusion among the Churches ; and as such a Practice can suit none but careless and disorderly Persons, the Church they belong to ought to admonish them, and if they still persist to censure them.

The same Reasons hold good, against those who require a Dismissal from the Church they belong to, unto one more remote. If one Member may be so dismissed, another may, even Officers of the Church as well as others. To dismiss a Member to the World at large, would be yet more preposterous ; and ought never to be done, any other Way but by Excommunication. The usual Plea for such an unreasonable Request is, either, that they cannot profit under such a Ministry, or that the Concerns of the Church are not properly managed ; but the Truth is, Pride is generally at the Bottom of such Demands ; for an humble Christian will e-