

to advance the Redeemer's Kingdom, you cannot view with indifference those mighty movements which, in our day, are made by the christian world to diffuse the light of divine truth, and to spread the knowledge of salvation through Christ crucified, among the nations. An irresistible impulse has been given to the operations of Bible Societies. The oracles of God are circulating in a great variety of languages, with unexampled rapidity. Christians of all denominations, it should seem, with one consent agree to put their fellow men in possession of the sacred Scriptures, without note or comment; and in this God-like measure we trust you take an active part. The Missionaries of the cross have already unfurled the banners of the Prince of Peace in every quarter of the Globe. Multitudes of the grossest idolaters have submitted to his sceptre, become the subjects of his grace, and now worship him as "Lord of all;" and we presume the period can be at no great distance, when "all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and when all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him." It is pleasing to reflect that of late, in many sections of our own beloved and highly favored country, God has poured out his Spirit, displayed his omnipotent power to save, and rendered the place of his feet glorious. The wilderness and the solitary places have been made glad, and the desert to bud and blossom as the rose. These goings of our God in his sanctuary, these displays of his matchless grace, we trust, have filled our hearts with admiring gratitude, and occasioned a song of thanksgiving to his blessed name. May our unceasing prayer ever be, "Let the whole earth be filled with HIS glory!" The river which makes glad the City of our God is flowing in new channels, winding its course among humble valleys, refreshing thirsty deserts, and enriching with his choicest blessings the most distant climes and nations, until, agreeably to divine prediction, "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth." It will doubtless be gratifying to you, to be informed, that during the past year, the Lord, in infinite mercy, has been pleased to pour out his Spirit on the churches composing our infant Association, and has rendered his word effectual for the salvation of many precious souls; so that we have been constrained "to thank God and take courage." The business of our present session has been conducted with the utmost harmony and brotherly love, and we have found by sweet experience the truth of that declaration: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; for there, the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life forever more!"

We solicit, dear Brethren, the continuance of your correspondence, and shall always be happy to hear of the prosperity of the cause of Jesus among you: and may you ever be found "standing fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel!"

ARCHIBALD MACLAY, *Moderator.*
CHARLES G. SOMMERS, *Clerk.*

MINUTES

OF THE

HUDSON RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

HELD IN THE MULBERRY-ST. BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE,
NEW-YORK,

On the 5th and 6th of August 1818.

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1. AT three o'clock P. M. brother LEWIS LEONARD preached the introductory sermon from *Rom. xiii. 12.* "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

2. Business was introduced with prayer by brother JOHN STANFORD. Brother LEWIS LEONARD was chosen Moderator, and brother ARCHIBALD MACLAY, Clerk.

3. Ministers from other Churches and Associations, present, were affectionately invited to take a seat with us. The following brethren took their seats, *viz.* Burgis Allison, Luther Rice, James Winchell, Horatio G. Jones, Ira Chace, Johnson Chace, Samuel Cornelius, Joshua Bradley, John Healy, William Ashton, James M'Laughlin, and Thomas Baldwin.

4. Letters from the following Churches were read:

CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Baptized.	Rec'd by let.	Dismissed.	Excluded.	Restored.	Deceased.	Total.
Poughkeepsie,	{ LEWIS LEONARD, Daniel H. Barnes, Mat. B. Talmadge, William Plummer, James Wilson,	1	4	2		1		77
Fayette-street, N. Y.	{ JOHN WILLIAMS, JOHN STANFORD, Thomas Hayes, Thomas Fenwick, Thomas Hewitt, Benjamin Pike, William Colgate, Thomas Purser, John Cauldwell.	23	12	14	2	11		466

Carried over
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CHURCHES.	MESSENGERS.	Baptized.	Rec'd by let.	Dismissed.	Excluded.	Restored.	Deceased.	Total.
	<i>Brought forward</i>	24	12	18	4		12	543
Mulberry-st. N. Y.	ARCHIBALD MACLAY, Charles Brooks, Edward Probyn, Samuel V. D. Moore, Thomas Stokes, Elijah Lewis, Wm. T. Burlingham, Michael Noe, Charles C. Andrews, John Hunt,	55	11	4	6	1	2	393
Mount Pleasant,	JACOB H. BROUNER, Caleb Willis, William Sing, Mark Yale, Alexander Calhoun, William Mangam,	8		1	3			78
Hudson, . .	AVERY BRIGGS, —— Webster, —— Whiting,	15	3	5				94
Troy, . . .	CHARLES G. SOMMERS, Platt Titus, Asa Shelden, Thomas Skelding, George Lent, John Henderson, Isaac V. Powelson,	22	11	13	6		2	244
TOTAL,		124	37	41	19	1	16	1352

5. *Resolved*, That Luther Rice preach this evening; and that a collection be taken to aid the important cause of Foreign Missions.

6. *Resolved*, That we adjourn until to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock.

7. *Resolved*, That the Association appoint a prayer meeting to-morrow morning at the rising of the sun.

Prayer by brother Cushman.—Adjourned.

THURSDAY MORNING.

Met agreeably to appointment Prayer by brother Ashton.

1. The Corresponding Letter, written by brother Brouner, was presented and read.

2. A Letter written by the pious Andrew Fuller, on the subject of Church Discipline, was presented by brother Maclay, in lieu of the Circular he was appointed to write, which was read.

3. A Committee, consisting of brethren Williams, Maclay, Brouner, Stokes, and M'Laughlin, were appointed to revise the above letters.

4. Letters and Minutes from the following Associations were received, viz. Warren; Shaftsbury; Philadelphia, Wm. Staughton, John P. Peckworth, *Messengers*; Warwick; Hartford; Boston; Franklin; Rensselaerville.

5. Appointed the following Messengers, to sister Associations: viz. to *Warren*, brethren Bradley and Leonard. *Shaftsbury*, brethren Sommers, Covil, Titus, and Hoyle. *Philadelphia*, brethren Maclay and Purser. *Warwick*, brethren Leonard, Wilson, and Hunt. *Hartford*, brethren Leonard and Cushman. *Boston*, brethren Leonard, Bradley, Sommers and Winchell. *Franklin*, brethren Bradley and Sommers. *Rensselaerville*, brethren Bradley, Brouner and Briggs. *Charleston*, Hon. Matthias B. Talmadge and brother Elijah Lewis.

6. *Resolved*, That brethren Rice, and Bradley, be appointed as a Committee, to visit and perpetuate our correspondence with the following Associations, viz. Otsego, Madison, Cayuga, Black River, Chemung, Ontario, and Holland Purchase.

7. The Committee appointed to revise the Corresponding and Circular Letters, report: that they beg leave to recommend their adoption without any alteration—upon which,

8. *Resolved*, That the Corresponding and Circular Letters be adopted.

9. *Resolved*, That the Association have learned with great satisfaction, that the subject of a Baptist Theological Seminary continues to occupy the attention of the Churches; and that the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, is prepared to carry the contemplated plan into effect, as soon as sufficient funds can be obtained for the purpose.

10. *Resolved*, That our next Annual Meeting be held at Mount Pleasant, on the first Wednesday in August, 1819, at 10 o'clock, A. M. and that brother Stanford preach the Introductory Sermon; in case of failure brother Sommers.

11. *Resolved*, That brother Briggs write the Circular, and brother Leonard the Corresponding Letter.

12. *Resolved*, That brethren Maclay and Stokes be a Committee to superintend the printing and distribution of the minutes; and that one thousand copies be printed, and that one thousand copies of the Circular Letter be printed separately.

13. *Resolved*, That the Sermon for the benefit of the Education Society, be preached to-morrow evening.

14. The following sums, collected by the churches of this Association, for the Education Society, were presented :

Fayette-street, N. Y. - - - -	\$ 50 00
Mulberry-street, N. Y. - - - -	24 53
Mount Pleasant, - - - - -	5
Hudson, - - - - -	
Poughkeepsie, - - - - -	4 75
Troy, - - - - -	11 8

15. *Resolved*, That three several collections be taken each year by the different Churches in this Association—one for the Foreign Mission, one for the Home Mission, and one for the Education Society.

16. *Resolved*, That brother Maclay be appointed to preach a sermon at our next annual meeting, on Wednesday evening, for the benefit of the Education Society.

17. *Resolved*, That brother Baldwin be appointed to preach this evening.

Adjourned till 3 o'clock. Prayer by brother Staughton.

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Met according to adjournment at 3 o'clock, P. M.

Prayer by brother Cornelius.

1. The Committee appointed at our last annual meeting to supply some destitute places on the Hudson River with the word of life, reported, That the plan, in part, had been carried into effect; but that in consequence of the difficulty of obtaining suitable supplies for the pulpit during the absence of our brethren, the plan had not gone into operation so extensively as was contemplated: whereupon, *Resolved*, That brethren Withington, Skelding, and Probyn, be a Committee to adjust the proper proportion to be paid by each of the two Societies which engaged to bear the expense of carrying the above plan into effect.

2. *Resolved*, That the Association rejoice to learn, through the medium of a Circular from the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, that the important cause of Missions continues to engage their attention; and that we appoint our Secretary to communicate the same to the Corresponding Secretary of the Board.

3. A communication has been received from a Baptist Mission Society in Kentucky soliciting from this body counsel and funds in reference to the civilization and moral improvement of the Indians: on which, *Resolved*, That it is the sense of this body that the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions is exerting itself in this business in a way prudent, zealous, and effective; and that from their knowledge of the members of that body, they believe that what funds they can spare cannot be better employed than by committing them to their sacred charge.

4. *Resolved*, That the publication in the Latter day Luminary relating to the republication of the Works of Andrew Fuller, be inserted in our minutes.

The business of the Association being finished at 6 o'clock P. M., the Moderator delivered an affectionate address to the assembly, and brother Healy concluded with prayer.

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CIRCULAR LETTER. *Madison 1818*

ON THE DISCIPLINE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCHES.

The Elders and Brethren of the several Baptist Churches belonging to the Hudson River Baptist Association, met in New-York, August 5, 1818.

To the Churches with whom they are connected.

BELOVED BRETHREN.

WHEN the apostles, by the preaching of the word, had gathered in any place a sufficient number of individuals to the faith of Christ, it was their uniform practice, for the further promotion of his kingdom in that place, to form them into a Religious Society, or Christian Church. Being thus associated in the name of Christ, divine worship was carried on, Christian ordinances observed, holy discipline maintained, and the word of life, as the light by the golden candlesticks, exhibited. Among them our Lord Jesus Christ, as the high priest of our profession, is represented as walking; observing the good, and applauding it; pointing out the evil, and censuring it; and holding up life and immortality to those who should overcome the temptation of the present state.

Let us suppose him to walk amongst our several churches, and to address us as he addressed the seven churches in Asia. We trust he would find some things to approve; but we are also apprehensive that he would find many things to censure. Let us then look narrowly into the *Discipline* of the primitive churches, and compare ours with it.

By discipline, however, we do not mean to include the whole of the order of a Christian Church; but shall at this time confine our attention to that part of church-government which consists in—

A MUTUAL WATCH OVER ONE ANOTHER, AND THE CONDUCT WE ARE DIRECTED TO PURSUE IN CASES OF DISORDER.

A great part of our duty consists in cultivating what is lovely, but this is not the whole of it; we must prune as well as plant, if we would bear much fruit, and be Christ's disciples. One of the things applauded in the church of Ephesus was that *they could not bear those who were evil*.

Yet we are not to suppose from hence that no irregularity or imperfection whatever, is an object of forbearance. If uniformity

be required in such a degree as that every difference in judgment or practice shall occasion a separation, the churches may be always dividing into parties, which we are persuaded was never encouraged by the apostles of our Lord, and cannot be justified in trivial or ordinary cases. A contrary practice is expressly taught us in the Epistle to the Romans; (Chap. xiv.) and the cases in which it is to be exercised are there pointed out. An object of forbearance however must be one that may exist without being an occasion of dispute and wrangling in the church: It must *not be to doubtful disputations*, ver. 1. it must also respect things which do not enter into the essence of God's *kingdom*, the leading principles of which are *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*. ver. 16, 17. That which does not subvert the gospel of the kingdom, nor set aside the authority of the king, though it be an imperfection, is yet to be borne with. Finally, it must be something which does not *destroy the work of God*, or which is not inconsistent with the progress of vital religion in the church, or in one's own soul. ver. 20. In all such cases we are not to judge one another, but every man's conscience is to be his judge. ver. 23.

In attending to those things which are the proper objects of discipline, our first concern should be to see that all our measures are aimed at *the good of the party, and the honour of God*. Both these ends are pointed out in the case of the Corinthian offender. All was to be done *that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord*, and to *clear themselves* as a church from being partakers of his sin. If these ends be kept in view they will preserve us from much error; particularly, from the two great evils into which churches are in danger of falling, false lenity, and unchristian severity. There is often a party found in a community, who, under the name of tenderness, are for neglecting all wholesome discipline; or if this cannot be accomplished, for delaying it to the utmost. Such persons are commonly the advocates for disorderly walkers, especially if they be their particular friends or relations. Their language is, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone. My brother hath fallen to-day, and I may fall to-morrow." This spirit, though it exists only in individuals, provided they be persons of any weight or influence, is frequently known to impede the due execution of the laws of Christ; and if it pervade the community, it will soon reduce it to the lowest state of degeneracy. Such for a time was the spirit of the Corinthians; but when brought to a proper sense of things, what *carefulness it wrought in them, yea what clearing of themselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge*.—In opposing the extreme of false tenderness, others are in danger of falling into unfeeling severity. This spirit will make the worst of every thing, and lead men to convert the censures of the church into weapons of private revenge. Persons of this description know not

of what manner of spirit they are. They lose sight of the good of the offender. It is not love that operates in them; for love worketh no evil. The true medium between these extremes is a union of *mercy and truth*. Genuine mercy is combined with faithfulness, and genuine faithfulness with mercy; and this is the only spirit that is likely to *purge iniquity*. (Prov. xvi. 6) Connivance will produce indifference; and undue severity will arm the offender with prejudice, and so harden him in sin: but the love of God and of our brother's soul are adapted to answer every good end. If we love God, like Levi, we shall know no man after the flesh, nor acknowledge our nearest kindred; but shall observe his word and keep his covenant. And if we love the soul of our brother, we shall say, "He is fallen to-day, and I will reprove him for his good: I may fall to-morrow, and then let him deal the same with me." Love is the grand secret of church discipline, and will do more than all other things put together, towards insuring success.

In the exercise of discipline it is necessary to distinguish between faults which are the consequences of sudden temptation, and such as are the result of premeditation and habit. The former requires a compassionate treatment; the latter a greater portion of severity. The sin of Peter in denying his Lord was great, and if noticed by the enemies of Christ, might bring great reproach upon his cause; yet, compared with the sin of Solomon it was little. He first gave way to licentiousness; then to idolatry, and on finding that God, as a punishment for his sin, had given ten tribes to Jeroboam, he sought to kill him. Cases like this are immediately dangerous, and require a prompt and decided treatment, and in which hesitating tenderness would be the height of cruelty. *Of some have compassion, making a difference; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*. (Jude 22, 23. See also Gal. vi. 1.)

In all our admonitions regard should be had to the age and character of the party. An elder, as well as other men, may be in fault, and a fault that may require to be noticed; but let him be told of it in a tender and respectful manner. While you expostulate with younger men on a footing of equality, pay a deference to age and office.—*Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren*. (1 Tim. v. 1.)

In the due execution of Christian discipline there are many things to be done by the members of churches *individually*; and it is upon the proper discharge of these duties that much of the peace and purity of a church depends. If we be faithful to one another there will be but few occasions for public censure. Various improprieties of conduct, neglects of duty, and declensions in the power of godliness, are the proper subjects of pastoral admonition. It is one essential branch of this office to *rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering*. (2. Tim. iv. 2.) Nor is this work-

confined to pastors: Christians are directed to *admonish one another*. (Rom. xv. 14.) Indeed there are things which a wise and affectionate people will be concerned to take upon themselves, lest a prejudice should be contracted against the ministry, which may prevent its good effects. This is peculiarly necessary in the settling of differences, in which whole families may be interested, and in which it is extremely difficult to avoid the suspicion of partiality.

In all cases of *personal offence*, the rule laid down by our Lord, in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, ought to be attended to; and no such offence ought to be admitted before a church till the precept of Christ has been first complied with by the party or parties concerned.

In many cases where faults are *not* committed immediately against us, but which are unknown except to a few individuals, love will lead us to endeavour to reclaim the party if possible, without any further exposure. *A just man will not be willing*, unnecessarily to make his brother a *public example*. The scriptures give peculiar encouragement to these personal and private attempts. *If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.* (James v. 19. 20.)

In cases of *evil report*, where things are said of a brother, in our hearing, which, if true, must affect his character, and the purity of the church, it cannot be right to go on to report it. Love will not lead to this. Many reports we know are unfounded; or if true in the main, they may have been aggravated; or there may be circumstances attending the case, which if fully understood would make things appear very different from the manner in which they have been represented. Now it is almost impossible that any one but the party himself should be acquainted with all these circumstances, or able to give a full account of them. No time therefore should be lost, ere we enquire at the hand of our brother, or if on any consideration we feel that to be unsuitable, it would be proper to apply to an officer of the church, who may conduct it with greater propriety.

There are cases of a more public nature still, in which much of the peace and happiness of a church depends upon the conduct of its members in their individual capacity. The charge given by the apostle to the Romans, (chap. xvi. 17, 18.) though applicable to a church, yet seems to be rather addressed to the individuals who compose it.—*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* The characters to be avoided appear to be persons whose object it is to set up a party

in the church, of which they may be the heads or leaders; a kind of religious demagogues. Such men are found, at one time or other, in most societies; and in some cases the peace of the churches has been invaded by strangers, who are not of their own community. Let the “brethren” have their eye upon such men. “Mark them:” trace their conduct, and you will soon discover their motives. Stand aloof from them, and “avoid” striking in with their dividing measures. In case of their being members, the church, collectively considered, ought, no doubt, to put away from amongst them such wicked persons: but as every collective body is composed of individuals, if those individuals suffer themselves to be drawn away, the church is necessarily thrown into confusion, and rendered incapable of a prompt, unanimous, and decided conduct. Let members of churches, therefore, beware how they listen to the insinuations of those who would entice them to join their party. Men of this stamp are described by the apostle, and therefore may be known, particularly by three things—First, by their doctrine; “it is contrary to that which has been learned of Christ.” Secondly, by their selfish pursuits: “they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies.” Thirdly, by their insinuating whining pretences of affectionate regard towards their partizans: “by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple.”

To this may be added, there are duties on individuals in their behaviour towards persons who *lie under the censure of the Church*. If they still continue in a state of impenitence, persist in their sin, or be irreconciled to the church’s proceedings with them, it is of the utmost consequence that every member should act a uniform part towards them. We may, it is true, continue our ordinary and necessary intercourse with them as men, in the concerns of this life: but there must be no familiarity, no social interchange, no visitings to them, nor receiving visits from them, nothing in short that is expressive of connivance at their conduct.—*If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, we must not keep company with such an one, no not to eat.* (1 Cor. v. 11.) If individual members act contrary to this rule, and carry it freely towards an offender, as if nothing had taken place, it will render the censure of the church of none effect. Those persons also who behave in this manner will be considered by the party as his friends, and others who stand aloof as his enemies, or at least as being unreasonably severe; which will work confusion, and render void the best and most wholesome discipline. We must act in concert, or we may as well do nothing. Members who violate this rule are partakers of other men’s sins, and deserve the rebukes of the church, for counteracting its measures.

With respect to those things which fall under the cognizance of

a church in its *collective capacity*, we earnestly recommend, in general, that every thing be done not only with a view to the honour of God, and the good of the party, as before observed, but *with a special regard to the revealed will of Christ*. That some kind of order be preserved, in every community, is necessary to its existence. Decency, reputation, and even worldly policy, will induce us to take some notice of gross immoralities: but this is not Christian discipline: nor will it be productive of its salutary effects. In the choice, of officers, few if any churches would elect a profligate: but if opulence be allowed to supply the place of spirituality, or ambitious or litigious characters be preferred on the principle of expediency, as a means of keeping them in better humour, is it not carnal? So, in matters of discipline, few churches would suffer a grossly, immoral or litigious character to continue amongst them unnoticed: but if, instead of a calm, impartial and decided procedure, we enter into pusillanimous compromises with the offender, consenting that he should withdraw of his own accord; if the crimes of rich men be either entirely overlooked, or but slightly touched, lest the *cause* should suffer from their being offended; or if the misconduct of poor men be disregarded, on the ground of their being persons of little or no account, *are we not carnal, and walk as men?* Brethren! Are there any such things amongst us? Search and consider. Such things ought not to be. The private withdrawal of an individual, if it be without good reasons, may justify a church in admonishing him, and, if he cannot be reclaimed, in excluding him: but it cannot of itself dissolve the relation. Till such exclusion has taken place he is a member, and his conduct affects their reputation as much as that of any other member. With regard to a neglect of discipline lest it should injure the *cause*, what cause must that be which requires to be thus supported? Be it our concern to obey the laws of Christ, and leave him to support his own cause. If it sink by fulfilling his commandments, let it sink. He will not censure us for not supporting the ark with unhallowed hands. And if it be criminal to fear the rich, it cannot be less so to despise the poor. Let brotherly love abound towards both. Do all things without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

We cannot enumerate all the particular cases which fall under the cognizance of a Christian church, but shall mention a few which are recorded in the Scriptures for our imitation.

A DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL, OR ANY OF ITS LEADING DOCTRINES, is an object of Christian discipline. *I would they were even cut off that trouble you—I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam—so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.—A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subvert-*

ed, and sinneth, being condemned of himself. (Gal. v. 12. Rev. ii. 14, 15. Tit. iii. 10.)

It is worthy of notice, that the only passage in the New Testament wherein heresy is introduced as *an object of discipline*, makes no mention of any thing as composing it but *what relates to the principles of the party*. It may be supposed that those who were accounted heretics by the apostles were as impure in their lives as they were antichristian in their doctrine, and that they were commonly disturbers of the peace and unity of the churches: but however this might be, neither of these evils are alleged as the reason for which the heretic was to be *rejected*. All that is mentioned is this: *He is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself*.

He is “subverted;” that is, his professed faith in the gospel is in effect overturned, or rendered void; consequently he requires to be treated as an unbeliever. He is “condemned of himself;” that is, the gospel being a consistent whole, he who rejects some of its leading principles, while he professes to retain others, is certain to fall into self-contradiction; which, if clearly pointed out in a “first and second admonition,” and he still persist, he will be compelled obstinately to shut his eyes against the light, and thus, “sin” against the dictates of his own conscience.

It has been asked by persons who disapprove of all church proceedings on account of a difference in religious principles, Who is to judge what is heresy? We answer, Those who are to judge what is immorality in dealing with loose characters. To suppose it impossible to judge what heresy is, or to deny that the power of so deciding rests in a Christian church, is to charge the apostolic precept with impertinence. It is true, the judgment of a church may be erroneous as well as that of an individual; and it becomes them in their decisions to consider that they will all be revised at the great day: but the same may be said of all human judgment, civil or judicial, to which no one is so void of reason, as on this account to object.

It has been further objected, that censuring a person on account of his religious sentiments, invades the right of private judgment, is inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel, and contrary to the leading principles on which protestants have separated from the church of Rome, and protestant dissenters from the church of England. The right of private judgment, while we claim no connexion with others, is an undoubted right. We may be Christians, infidels, or atheists, and none but God has any control over us: but if we desire the friendship and esteem of good men notwithstanding, or claim admission to a Christian church; or should we be in it already, and claim a right to continue our situation surely they would not be obliged to comply. If so, our right of private judgment must interfere with that of others, whose judg-

ment tells them that there can be no fellowship between light and darkness, or communion between him that believeth and an infidel. If the liberty of the gospel consists in a right of fellowship with Christian churches, whatever be our principles, it will follow not only that unbelievers may claim visible communion with believers; but that no exclusions for immorality can be justified provided the party insists that his sentiments are in harmony with his practice. There is a great variety of opinion as to what is morality, as well as to what is truth. One loose character believes in polygamy, another in concubinage, and a third can see no harm in fornication, nor even in adultery, provided it be undiscovered.*

If the churches of Rome, and England, had done nothing more than exclude from their society those characters whom they considered as deviating from the first principles of the gospel, without subjecting them to civil penalties or disabilities, however we might have disputed the truth of their doctrine, we could not justly have objected to their discipline. We should suppose that the separation of protestants from the one, and of protestant dissenters from the other, was for the sake of enjoying a purer church state, wherein they might act up to the laws of Zion's King; and not that they might live as though there were no king in Israel, which is the case where every man does that which is right in his own eyes.

IN CASES OF NOTORIOUS AND COMPLICATED WICKEDNESS, it appears, that in the primitive churches, immediate exclusion was the consequence. In the case of the incestuous Corinthian, there are no directions given for his being admonished, and excluded only in case of his being incorrigibly impenitent. The apostle determined what should be done—*In the name of the Lord Jesus when ye are gathered together to deliver such a one unto Satan.* We cannot but consider it as an error in the discipline of some churches where persons have been detected of gross and aggravated wickedness, that their exclusion has been suspended, and in many cases omitted, on the ground of their professed repentance. While the evil was a secret it was persisted in, but when exposed by a public detection, then repentance is brought forward, as it were in arrest of judgment. But can that repentance be genuine which is pleaded for the purpose of warding off the censures of a Christian church? We are persuaded it cannot. The eye of a true penitent will be fixed on the greatness of his sin, and he will be the last to discern or talk of his repentance for it. So far from pleading it, in order to evade censure, he will censure himself, and desire nothing more than that testimony may be borne against his conduct for the honour of Christ.

* Such was the morality taught by Mr. Hume.

But allowing that repentance in such cases is sincere, still it is not of such account as to set aside the necessity of exclusion. The end to be answered by this measure is not merely the good of the party, but the "clearing" of a Christian church from the very appearance of conniving at immorality; and which cannot be accomplished by repentance only. Though *Miriam* might be truly sorry for her sin in having spoken against Moses, and though she might be healed of her leprosy; yet *the Lord said unto Moses, if her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days; and after that let her be received in again.* (Numb. xii. 14.)

We do not suppose, however, that every notorious fault requires immediate exclusion. The general rule given is—that NOTORIOUS EVILS SHOULD MEET WITH A PUBLIC REBUKE. *Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear.* (1 Tim. v. 20.) But this proceeding does not appear to amount to exclusion; it is rather of the nature of a *censure* or *reprimand*, accompanying an admonition. To us it appears that the circumstances attending a sin, ought to determine whether it require immediate exclusion or not. If these be highly aggravating; if there appear to have been premeditation, intention, and perseverance in the crime, *put away from amongst yourselves that wicked person*: but if circumstances extenuate, rather than heighten the evil, solemn admonition, accompanied with rebuke, ought to suffice, and no exclusion to follow but in case of incorrigible impenitence.

There are also faults which do not come under the denomination of notorious sins, wherein directions are given for recovering the offenders WITHOUT ANY MENTION BEING MADE OF EXCLUSION, EITHER IMMEDIATE OR ULTIMATE. There is perhaps in all the churches a description of men whose characters are far from being uniformly circumspect, and yet not sufficiently irregular to warrant their being separated from communion. They are disorderly walkers; busy-bodies in other men's matters, while negligent of their own; in a word, unamiable characters. Now those that are such we are directed to exhort, and charge that they conduct themselves as becometh Christians. If after this they continue disorderly, observe a degree of distance in your conduct towards them; withdraw your intimacy; let them feel the frowns of their brethren: yet be not wholly reserved, but occasionally explain to them the reasons of your conduct, affectionately admonishing them at the same time to repentance and amendment of life. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.—For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat*

their own bread. And if any obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him that he may be ashamed: yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (2 Thes. iii. 6—15.) If churches were to consult only their own reputation, they would often discard such persons at an early period: but where there is reason to hope that the heart is right in the main, great forbearance must be exercised, and long perseverance in endeavouring to recover. How many imperfections were discovered in the conduct of the twelve apostles, while their Lord was with them, and what an example of forbearance has he left us! One character reclaimed is of greater account and more to the honour of a Christian church, than many discarded.

Finally, a watchful eye upon the state of the church, and of particular members, with a seasonable interposition, may do more towards the preservation of good order than all other things put together. Discourage whisperings, backbitings, and jealousies. Frown on tale bearers, and give no ear to their tales. Nip contentions in the bud. Adjust differences in civil matters among yourselves. Bring together at an early period those in whom misconception and distrust have begun to operate, ere ill opinion ripened into settled dislike. By a frank and timely explanation in the presence of a common friend, *that* may be healed in an hour which if permitted to proceed, a series of years cannot eradicate. Be affectionately free with one another. Give tender and faithful hints where it appears to you that one of your brethren is in danger of being drawn aside from the principles or spirit of the gospel. Let all be given, from their first entering into connexion with you, to expect them. If any one take offence at such treatment, give him to understand that he who cannot endure a caution or a reproof, is unfit for Christian society; and is in the utmost danger of falling into mischief.

The free circulation of the blood, and the proper discharge of all the animal functions, are not more necessary to the health of the body, than good discipline is to the prosperity of a community.

If it were duly considered how much the general interests of religion, and even the salvation of men, may be affected by the purity and harmony of Christian churches, we should tremble at the idea of their being interrupted by us. The planting of a church in a neighbourhood, where the gospel is preached, and the ordinances of Christ administered in their purity, is a great blessing. It is a temple reared for God, in which he deigns to record his name, to meet with his humble worshippers, and to bless them. We have seen churches of this description, in the midst of a career of spiritual prosperity, edifying one another in love, and gathering souls to the Redeemer's standard, all in a little time, blasted and ruined by some unhappy event that has thrown them into disorder. One of the members, it may be, has acted unworthily—he is reprov—

his relations or particular acquaintances take on his side—discipline is interrupted—the church is divided into parties—hard things are said on both sides—the bond of love is broken—tender minds are grieved, and retire—worship is but thinly attended, and the enjoyment of it is vanished—God's friends mourn in secret, and his enemies triumph, saying, *aha! so would we have it!* Truly it is a serious thing to occasion the ruin of a Church of Christ! *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy!*

LEWIS LEONARD, *Moderator.*
ARCHIBALD MACLAY, *Clerk.*

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CORRESPONDING LETTER,

Of the Hudson River Baptist Association, to the several Associations with whom they correspond.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

Having obtained help of God, we continue unto this day. We esteem it a great privilege to meet for the service of God in our respective places of worship; but how much greater the privilege to meet in association, where we behold our brethren assembled from different parts of the earth and hear them tell how great things the Lord has done for them, while we unite our voices with our hearts to praise the God of all grace. This reminds us of that great meeting when the redeemed of the Lord, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, shall join with one accord to sing, "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory, and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Professing, dear Brethren, to believe the glorious doctrine of God's everlasting, unchangeable love to his church, free justification by the righteousness of Christ imputed, and the sovereign grace of God in the commencement, progress, and complete salvation of his people; let us exhort one another daily, to walk worthy of God who hath called us unto his kingdom and glory, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Dear Brethren, we have not the pleasure of being able to state that great numbers have been received into our fellowship during the year past; yet we desire to be thankful that the Lord has called some out of darkness into his marvellous light, who have been constrained by his love to profess his name and cheerfully to obey him by following him without the camp, bearing his reproach. We