

S27821

Baptists. Vermont. Woodstock Association, 1813.

Minutes . . . at Cavendish, Vermont.

September, 29th & 30th, 1813.

Windsor, Vt., 1813. 15, [1] pp.

NRAB copy.

MINUTES

OF THE

WOODSTOCK ASSOCIATION

HOLDEN AT

CAVENDISH, Vermont.

SEPTEMBER, 29th & 30th, 1813.

WITH THEIR

Circular and Corresponding

LETTERS.

WINDSOR, VT.

PRINTED FOR THE ASSOCIATION.

1813.

MINUTES

OF THE

WOODSTOCK ASSOCIATION.

—0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0—

Wednesday, Sept. 29.

1. At one o'clock, P. M. Elder Seaman being absent, and Elder Leland declining preaching, on account of residing in the vicinity; the introductory sermon was delivered by Elder Kendrick, from ROMANS vi. 22. *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.**

2. Chose Elder Leland, Moderator, and Elder Going, Clerk.

3. Read the letters from the Churches; from which the following list was taken.

N. B. The names of ordained ministers are in small CAPITALS, and licenced preachers in *italics*. Those ministers with this mark (*) were not present. From churches marked thus (†) we have no intelligence. Vacant churches are distinguished by a dash— The figures in the first column denote the time when the churches were constituted.

CHURCHES.	MINISTERS and MESSENGERS.	Added,	Dismissed,	Excluded,	Died,	Total,	Money, D. C.
Newport,	—				3	180	2,34
	Elias Megregary, Nath. Wheeler,						
Windsor, 1786.	JABEZ COTTLE, Dea. Daniel Bugbee, Wm. Emerson,	1	1			48	1,10
Westmoreland, 1773.	— Dea. A. Snow, Seth Brittain, Sam. Robbins,	2	3		3	92	1,75
Chester,	AARON LELAND, Dea. I. Robinson, Asa Leland.	9			2	112	2,00
Alstead, 1790.	JER. HIGGEE, Oliver Shepard, Josiah Flint,	2	7		1	141	2,00
New London, 1788.	JOE SEAMAN,* Jonathan Greely,	1			8	135	2,30

* A sermon was preached at 10 o'clock A. M. by br. Wm. Taylor

Cornish,	ARIEL KENDRICK, Dea. E. Bingham, Seth Demming.	2	1	2	138	1,43
Plainfield, Jamaica,	JONA. CRAM,* — Dea. C. Wheaton, Marvel Howard.	2			47 79	1,00
Canaan, 1802.	— Josiah Clark, Richard Clark.	1		5	47	,75
Weathersfield, & Baltimore. 1803.	B. BOYNTON, Dea. S. Biglow, William Wood.	2	1	2	50	2,10
Grafton, 1803.	JOHN SPALDING, Dea. G. Smith, Joseph Crumb.	11	1		46	,86
Cavendish, 1803.	JONA. GOING, Jr. Dea. S. White, Asaph Fletcher,	12		2 7	89	2,00
Goshen,	JOHN COLBY, Dea. P. Tandy, Jona. Wakefield.	1		1	52	,82
Sutton, 1803.	— William Taylor.	1		1 2	62	,50
Windham, 1807.	THOMAS BAKER,	1	2	10	65	,50
Townshend,	S. KINGSBURY,* Evan Reed.	2	2	2	41	,50
Windsor, W. P. 1807.	SAMUEL LAMSON, Dea. Jonathan Hoyt, Daniel Ralph.			1	30	,75
Andover, 1803.	JOEL MANNING, Dea. S. Manning, Benjamin Taylor.	7		4	55	1,50
Londonderry, 1811.	GERSHOM LANE,* Dea. I. Baldwin, Levi Baldwin.	21		6	83	1,50
Acworth, 1809.	— Isaachar Mayo.			4	18	,50
Westminster, & Rockingham, 1812	JOSEPH ELLIOT,* Dea. B. Smith, John Tutill.	18	2	3	34	,80
Winhall, † 1812.	—	1			34	

Unity,

Moses Pike,
Dea. A. Chase,

Mountholly,
1804.

DANIEL PACKER,
Dea. E. Briant,
Simeon Dickerman.

3	3		34	,62
			1241	,30
97		25	11	
		59		1836

Money contributed by
the Churches, }

28,92

Do. in the hands of the former clerk,

\$ 3,00

Adjourned to 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

Preaching in several parts of the town in the evening.

Thursday Sept. 30.

Met according to adjournment. Opened by prayer.

4. Voted, that a Circular Letter, written in 1799, by A. Fuller, D. D. of England, be adopted by this Association, and printed in our minutes.

5. Read and accepted the corresponding Letter, prepared by Elder Leland.

6. Received communications from sister Associations ; and read their corresponding Letters.

ASSOCIATIONS,	MESSENGERS.	Minutes.
Warren,	---	---
Shaftsbury,	---	---
Vermont,	---	---
Barre,	---	---
Leyden,	---	---
Meredith,	---	---
New-Hampshire,	---	---
Dublin,	NATHANIEL BOLLES,	---
Starbridge,	---	---
Boston,	---	---
Dauville,	Samuel Minor,	---
	E. BRUBSON.	---
Fairfield,	---	---

7. Appointed Messengers to sister Associations.

To the Warren,	A. KENDRICK.
New-Hampshire,	Taylor & Hunting.
Shaftsbury,	LELAND and PACKER.
Leyden,	BAKER, SPALDING & KINGS- BURY.
Barre,	COTTLE, BAKER, & Ralph.

Mereuth,
Dublin,
Fairfield,
Boston,
Vermont,

BOYNTON.
HIGBEE, and KENDRICK.
GOING and Baldwin.
GOING and Howard.
Howard,

disciplinable

8. Quere from the Jamaica Church. Is it a ~~desirable~~ evil for a church-member to join the *Washington Benevolent Society*? Voted, that we consider it improper for the Association to answer the quere.

9. Quere from the Windham church. What is the duty of a church, when a person requests to join them, who has been excluded from another church, and a mutual council has judged the church wrong in his exclusion? *Ans.* We believe that every church possesses an independent right to discipline its own members; that ecclesiastical councils are only advisory;—and, therefore, that such excommunicated person ought not to be received.

10. Two of the committees, appointed last year, at the instance of the Vermont Association, to enquire whether some of our Elders have become heretodox in sentiment, being absent, they were unable to make a formal report, although they had paid some attention to the business:—whereupon it was voted, that another committee be appointed for the same purpose, to report at our next. Committee, Leland, Kendrick, and Going.

11. Voted, That the Association meet next year at Westmoreland, N. H. on the last Wednesday in September, at 1 o'clock, P. M.

☞ There will be a sermon preached at 10 o'clock A. M. of the first days of our future sessions.

12. Voted, That Elder Going preach the introductory sermon, in case of failure, Elder Leland.

13. Voted, That Elder Elliot write the Circular, and Elder Higbee the corresponding Letter.

After the close of business, a sermon was delivered by Elder Leland, from I. Pet. 5. 7.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Ministers and Messengers of the Woodstock Association, to the Churches which they represent, send Greeting.

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 farther 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 temptations of the present state.

Let us suppose him to walk among 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 our's 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 Christs 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 (ch. 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. x. 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 honor of God*. Both these ends are pointed out in the case of the Corinthian offenders. 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 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*.* 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

* *Prov. xvi. 6.*

faults which are the consequence 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 xli. 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 & 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 entreat 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 objects 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 endeavor 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.*

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 be 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 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 in 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, 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 idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, we must not keep company with such an one, no not to eat.* I 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 another man'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 honor 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 a better humor, 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 would 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 to 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 subverted, 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 persists, 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 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 controul 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 judgment 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 an 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 bro't 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 honor of Christ.

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

* Such was the morality taught by Mr. Hume.

for 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 crime, *put away from amongst yourselves that wicked person :* But if circumstances extenuate, rather than heighten the evil, solemn admonitions, accompanied with rebukes, 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, & 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 the 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 that 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 Theff. 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 endeavoring 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 honor 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, backbightings 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 mistrust have begun to operate, ere ill opinion ripen 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 interest 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 neighborhood, 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 designs 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 reprovèd—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 God shall destroy.*

ERRATA—In the 6th page, first line of the 8th article, for deſtrable evil, &c. read *disciplinable*. In same page, 9th article, 6th line for only advisory, &c. read *advisory*.

CORRESPONDING LETTER.

The ELDERS and MESSENGERS of the WOODSTOCK ASSOCIATION, to Associations with which they correspond, send christian salutation.

BELOVED FELLOW TRAVELLERS IN TRIBULATION.

NOW are the scriptures fulling before our eyes ; the nations are distressed ; the seas are roaring ; and men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things that are coming upon the earth. The heavens and the earth are both shakings, that is, the civil and religious establishments of this world. This is to us an incontestible evidence that the *stone*, cut out of the mountain without hands, is fast progressing through the world ; and that the kingdom set up by the God of Heaven, will gloriously prevail, however the kingdoms of the earth may oppose its progress. Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, that the king of Zion sits undisturbed upon his throne, building the walls of his holy habitation even in troublous times. The Holy Spirit is sent down in rich abundance in many parts of the earth, and converts to the christian faith are multiplied like the drops of the dew of the morning. The Holy scriptures are made familiar to the different nations, who have long lain in heathenish darkness ; but now through the tender mercy of our God, the light of Him, who was to enlighten the Gentiles, and be the glory of his people Israel, shines upon them, and they begin to enquire after the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ. With these animating prospects before us, let us hold fast the professions of our faith without wavering, and constantly exercise an unshaken confidence in the living God ; giving good heed unto the word delivered unto us. Let us treasure up in our hearts the precious and all-important truth of the *eternal Divinity* of Jesus Christ, as the great, and only foundation of the hope of Israel. For if this foundation be taken away, what will the churches, yea, what will the weeping disciples of Jesus do ? Will they not say, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."---Dear Brethren, He is our Lord and our God, and we will love Him ; He has died for us and we will worship him, even as we worship the Father : He is our king, and we will serve Him forever. Let us remember his word, and pray for the coming of his kingdom.

Doubt not, Brethren, for our joy in receiving your Letters and Messengers. We are refreshed to learn that you stand fast in the faith once delivered to the saints. We have a strong solicitude for a continuation of that correspondence, which has happily so long subsisted between us.

The churches composing this Association are steadfast in the belief of the *eternal and equal Divinity* of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and in the precious doctrine of grace inseparably connected with it.

Our present meeting has been generally harmonious, and mutually refreshing. We subscribe ourselves your brethren in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

In behalf of the Association,

AARON LELAND, Moderator,
JONATHAN GOING, JR. Clerk.