


OBSERVATIONS  
ON THE  
CONSTITUTION, UNITY, AND  
DISCIPLINE  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST.

ADDRESSED  
TO THE  
BRETHREN OF THE  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

—••••••••••—  
BY DAVID PURVIANCE.

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*Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered.—Jeremiah.*

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## OBSERVATIONS, &c.

A PAMPHLET has lately fallen into my hands, written by *R. Marshall & J. Thompson*, which I have read with attention, and (at least as far as I was capable) with impartiality

As their publication chiefly consists of a statement of Errors, in Doctrine and Discipline, which (as they apprehend) exist in the church, and among the people, with whom I stand connected; I have endeavored to realize that we are all liable to err; and often unwilling to see and acknowledge our errors. My prayer has been—"Lord show me wherein I have erred, wherein I am wrong, and lead me in the right way." I confess I do not view the Christian (or as it is frequently called, the Newlight) church, in the light represented by the brethren above named. But I apprehend it would be useless for me to state the difference in my views; as to matters of fact: and it is not my present design to enter into an investigation of doctrines.

We all profess to have taken the Holy Scriptures as the standard of doctrine and discipline; and admitting that evils do exist among us, a question arises whether this is occasioned by any defect or insufficiency in the rules prescribed in the word of God; or,

from a defect in our knowledge of those rules—and a want of faithfulness in the observance and execution of them.

We all admit that the Lord is our lawgiver; and that the doctrines taught, and rules for discipline, prescribed in the sacred scriptures, are perfect; being dictated by the unerring spirit of God. It appears to me, if more is necessary, the defect can only be supplied by the same spirit; or that men who make, ordain and establish other standards and forms for the church of Christ, or any branch thereof; ought to be able to show from the word of God, that they possess a delegated power from the supreme lawgiver so to do; otherwise their acts are unauthorised, and may be violated with impunity.

I do not doubt the sincerity of those who adopt human standards: while I freely show my own opinion, and practise according to my own views, I am not disposed to censure those that differ from me. Their honest design may be to preserve purity and order in the church; but I fear they are like *Uzza*, taking more pains than is pleasing to God. Nor do I believe that any argument in their favor; can be fairly deduced from experiment. It appears to me, that the only purpose answered by the creeds of sectarians, is, that they preserve their own peculiar tenets or notions; which descend from generation to generation, and serve to prevent mankind from free access to the pure unmixed fountain of truth.

It is the opinion of Marshall & Thompson, that some other forms of Doctrine and Discipline besides the Holy Scriptures, are necessary to remedy the numerous evils, of which they complain. It appears to me that they and I look thro' different glasses; I do not see that degree of corruption and disorder, which they represent to exist among us. I see the

glorious work of God advancing, sinners bowing to his sceptre, and christians growing stronger and stronger. And I believe all that is necessary to heal disorders, and to perfect the body of Christ, is to attain a better understanding of the word of God, and practise accordingly.

It is urged by many, that there is such a diversity among christians, both as to doctrine and practice, that it is expedient they should be divided into separate societies, and each regulated according to their own views. This reasoning appears plausible, but I dare not adopt the plan; because it leads to the establishment of divisions by human laws, which the laws of our supreme lawgiver expressly countermand.—I. Cor. i, 10. "Now I beseech you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." And moreover, it is contrary to the spirit which every believer receives, when he is adopted into the church of Christ. He loves God as his father, and all who are begotten of him, as his dear brethren. The spirit of Jesus, the living head, binds the members of his body to each other in love. In the same spirit we ought to abide. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." If a person had not a previous knowledge of different sects and names, in the church of Christ, he could scarcely form an idea of their existence, from reading the New Testament.

Impressed with a sense of the necessity of understanding the principles and constitution of the church of Christ, and the scriptural form of church government, I have paid some attention to the subject, and shall endeavor to communicate my ideas to the brethren, hoping that some profit may arise to the church; and that wherein I may be incorrect or defective, such as are capable will be so kind as

to point out the errors, and supply the defects; so that we may be fellow helpers together; and mutually aid in promoting the cause of truth.

I shall proceed, 1. to speak of the church: and 2. of church government.

## I. OF THE CHURCH.

1. The church of Christ is one spiritual body, including all who believe in his name, and are quickened by his Spirit. Rom. xii, 4, 5. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ. I. Cor. xii, 13—For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit—John x, 16. Pet. ii, 5. Eph. iv, 16.

2. The church is one household, having for its foundation the Holy Scriptures, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. Eph. ii, 19, 20, 21—Now therefore, ye are no more strangers, and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord.

3. The general church is divided into particular churches; as the church at Corinth, Ephesus, Smyrna, &c. Each having the same Lord, the same faith, or creed, the same laws and ordinances.—Eph. iv, 5. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. I. Cor. vii, 17. And so ordain I in all the churches.

A particular church may be constituted of such number of believers as local situation will admit.—We read of churches at particular houses—*I Cor. xvi, 19. Col. iv, 15.*

A church may consist of persons exercising divers gifts: an elder or elders, deacons and private members—*Rom. xii, 6, 7, 8.* Yet it does not appear that officers in a church, are essential to its constitution, or existence; but they may be appointed and ordained, when circumstances require. *Acts xiv.* Paul and Barnabas visited the churches, and ordained them elders in every church. The qualifications of an elder are delineated—*Tit. i, 6—9.* and I conceive that when a person or persons are found in any church, possessing those qualifications, he or they ought to be ordained. Also it appears from *Acts vi,* that in Jerusalem when the number of disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring, because the widows were neglected; on account of which, deacons were appointed. In like manner, it appears to me, that when circumstances render it necessary, in any particular church, deacons, or proper persons ought to be chosen and ordained, to have the oversight and management of such things as are necessary, for the welfare and good government of the church.

There are various duties incumbent on a particular church, for their mutual comfort and edification, assembling themselves together, uniting in social prayer, exhorting one another, &c. *Heb. x, 25.—Mat. xviii, 19, 20.—Acts xii, 5.*

## II OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

That which comes under this head, may be included in the following particulars:

1. *Receiving members.*
2. *Church censures, or removing offences.*
3. *Sending out preachers of the gospel.*
4. *The support of the ministry*

1. *Receiving members.* This belongs to the church. Rom. xiv, 1. Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Rom. xv, 7. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

The qualifications requisite to church-membership appear to be "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts xx, 21. Those who are united to Christ the living head, are virtually members of his body; and consequently entitled to the privileges of his church: I do not find that those particular points of doctrine, which distinguish the different sects of Christians at the present day, were called in question by the Apostles. The main point was, evidence that the professed disciple was a partaker of the same spirit. Acts x, 47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we. Acts viii, 37. And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Acts ii, 41, 8, 12. Rom. x, 9,

2. *Church censures, or removing offences.* Every transgression of the commandments of God, or holy precepts of the gospel, is an offence, and ought to be



removed. II. Thess. iii, 14, 15. "And if any man obey not our word, by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count not him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." In dealing with offenders, the primary object should be to retain and restore. Gal. vi, 1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The rule of proceeding prescribed, Mat. xviii, 15, 16, 17, ought to be invariably pursued. "Moreover if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, then hast thou gained thy brother, but if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." This rule of proceeding is more especially applicable in case of personal offences; but no doubt will apply where one member is hurt with any improper conduct of another. And by thus acting in the spirit of meekness and love, every thing may be avoided which is calculated to aggravate the offender, or spread the scandal. First, the person aggrieved is to go alone. Second, he is to call the aid of one or two more. Third, tell it unto the church. If the offender is obstinately perverse, and cannot be reclaimed, he is to be excluded. But while there is hope of restoring him, the proceedings are to be within the church, separate from the world.

Where a matter of scandal becomes notorious, and public censure is to be inflicted, the church is to act collectively: though it may be more particularly the duty of deacons to see that discipline is exercised, and such things removed as wound the body. I. Cor. v, 1. It is commonly reported that there is fornication among you. v. 4—In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and

my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan. v. 11—But now I have written to you not to keep company, 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, with such an one, no, not to eat. v. 13—Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Surely here are sufficient rules, so far as relates to immorality, in practice. But the greatest complaint is, that the scriptures do not furnish an adequate remedy for the prevalence of erroneous sentiments.

To which I answer—

That the word of God, is the only standard, by which we can fairly try and condemn error. If another standard is made, as a test of orthodoxy, it is as liable to be wrong as that which is to be tried by it. The church may err, with the perfect standard of divine truth in her hand; but if we give to imperfect creatures an imperfect standard of judgment, they are surely more liable to err. It is said—“Many who profess to believe the scriptures, differ widely in opinion.” This may be the case, with respect to a confession of faith, or any code of laws, human or divine. But a man’s saying he believes, is not evidence of the fact. The Jews professed to believe Moses, but Jesus says—“If ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me.” In matters of opinion, which do not directly tend to licentiousness, or to the subversion of christianity, charity and forbearance are to be exercised. Rom. xiv, 4, 5. But the great question is—How far shall this forbearance extend? Or to what point shall it be limited? I answer, it must be limited by the word of God, the law which the great legislator has ordained for

the government of his church. I see no more authority for the church to make a law to excommunicate a member, than the supreme court of the state of Ohio has to make a law to sentence a man to death or banishment. Whatever the private opinion of the judges may be, they are bound by the laws of the land; and if they transcend this, they are liable to impeachment. In like manner, if a member of the church is accused with heresy, we must have recourse to the word of God. For instance: suppose a man professes to believe the scriptures, and yet denies that Jesus Christ was literally born of the Virgin Mary; or that he was really crucified, and raised again from the dead; and argues (as I have understood some do) that these things were figurative. How shall we prove he is a heretic? We may have recourse to the second Epistle of John, 7th verse: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ." Also to Rom. x, 9. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"—and many other passages. I mention this as an example: and all such as come under the characters described, Titus i, 2. Rev. ii, 14, 15, 20. Or such as can be proven to be heretics, according to the scriptures. We know from Titus iii, 10, that if they cannot be reclaimed by admonition, they are to be rejected. In difficult or doubtful cases, the counsel and aid of the ministry or eldership ought to be obtained. Acts xv, 2.

I acknowledge it has been the case, in the course of the revival, both before and since the separation from the Presbyterians, that with many individuals, a thirst for novelty has been prevalent, and some have been charmed with enthusiastic notions; yet I believe there is no better correction for these things than the word of God.

3. *Sending out preachers of the gospel.* I do not find in the word of God, that any are authorised to exercise the functions of the gospel ministry, except such as are ordained and set apart to the sacred office, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery or eldership. Yet it is the privilege of the members of the body of Christ to exercise their gifts, "differing according to the grace that is given," and as shall be most for edification. Rom. xii, 6, 7, 8. If the spirit of Christ reigns in the body, every member (the eye, the ear, the foot, &c.) will fill his own place. I. Cor. chap. 12. Thus their several gifts will be manifested.

It appears to have been a practice in the primitive church, to give letters of commendation, to such as went out to exercise their gifts as public teachers. II. Cor. iii, 1. Also Acts xviii, 24 to 28. We learn that Apollos, an eloquent man and fervent in spirit, taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. He was not, strictly speaking, a preacher of the gospel of Christ; but Aquilla and Priscilla having expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly; when he was disposed to go into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him. So I conceive, in the present state of the church, it is needful, that if any one believes he is called to labor in exhortation or preaching, the church from which he goes out being satisfied as to his qualifications, should give him a letter of commendation. And from II. Tim. ii, 2, it appears to me that at least one ordained preacher ought to act in concert with the church, in giving such letter. The form of the letter may be such as in the eye of the civil law may be called a licence.

It may be objected, that by this means ignorant, unqualified men, will come into the ministry. If some should set out who are not duly qualified, it

will soon be manifest ; and they ought to be dissuaded. If they are good men, they will discover they have stepped out of their sphere, If not, they are likely to sink for want of support and encouragement. And if any are found pernicious, and will not take counsel, or desist, they may be dealt with as offenders. Those who are found useful, having made sufficient proof of their ministry, may be ordained. This is nearly the plan we have pursued. And though I hear of an ignorant or corrupt ministry, I know them not. Some have risen from private life to public usefulness ; and the weakest within my knowledge, is (I believe) doing some good.

ORDINATION is to be performed by fasting and prayer, and laying on the hands of the Presbytery. Acts xiii, 3, 14, 23. I. Tim. iv, 14. II. Tim. i, 6 I cannot find that there are different offices appertaining to ordained preachers. "Elder," and "Bishop," are only different names for a person exercising the same office. Tit. i, 5—7.

It appears from Acts xiv, 23, and Titus i, 5, that it was the primitive practice, to ordain elders in the churches ; and no doubt with the approbation and consent of the church in which it was done. Yet from the direction given to Timothy—II. Tim. ii, 2, and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also—and to Titus—Tit. i, 5—9.—It was requisite that they should examine, and be satisfied as to the qualifications of those to whom they committed the important trust.

The qualifications are plainly delineated.—I. Tim. chap. iii, and Tit. chap. i. And ought to be particularly observed, both by the church, and by those who perform the ceremony of ordination.

Complaints exist upon this subject ; and even if they are groundless (which I cannot certainly determine) they ought to teach us the necessity of strict attention to the rules prescribed in the holy scriptures.

Elders are required to be subject one to another. I. Pet. v, 5. An Elder, chargeable with any thing contrary to truth and righteousness, ought to be dealt with by such of his brethren as have opportunity, in order that the evil may be removed. If this measure fails of success, the matter ought to be referred to such a convention of the eldership, or preachers, as the nature of the case may require.— Acts xv, 2, “ When therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined, that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question. v. 6, “ and the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.” The apostles and elders having decided the question, sent their decision, by letter, to the church ; of which the following is a part : v. 24, “ Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us, have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ye must be circumcised and keep the law ; to whom we gave no such commandment.”

It may be said, that this was a question of doctrine, and will not apply to immorality in practice. I can see no difference ; because morality is as requisite a qualification in a bishop or elder, as soundness in the faith or aptness to teach. I. Tim. chap. iii, Tit. chapter

It may be objected farther, that an elder may refuse to be subject to his brethren, and yet continue to preach. I answer, the churches are not to receive

such an one. The church at Ephesus tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and found them liars. I do not apprehend they instituted a judicial process ; but they tried them by the word of truth, and rejected them. Also, read II. John, x.

It would be too tedious to answer every objection, which may be started ; but I rest assured, that as long as the spirit of Jesus reigns in the church, and as long as his people trust in him, and follow his word ; he will clear their way through every difficulty. I think it dishonoring to the king and head of the church, to suppose that the laws he has given are insufficient for the government of his kingdom.

4. *Support of Ministers.*—It is required of the church to contribute for the support of those who labor in the gospel. I. Cor. ix, 14. “ Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.

As complaints were made in former days, that the widows were neglected ; so complaints are now made, that the preachers are neglected. And as seven men duly qualified, were chosen and set over that business ; I think the example sufficient for the church, whenever it becomes necessary, to choose a competent number of suitable persons, who may be ordained, and attend to this and other exigencies.

It is a matter of importance to keep the proper medium, between making the preaching of the gospel a mercenary business, and robbing God of the free-will offerings, he requires for its support.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, tithes and offerings were required for the support of the priesthood. The people are charged with robbing God, by withholding them. Mal iii, 8. In consequence of their

bringing them into the store-house; an abundant blessing is promised.—v. 10. Something similar is found in the New Testament. Gal. vi, 6, 7. Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Paul commends the Philippian church for their bounty to him. Phil. iv, 17. “Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.” And concerning collections for the saints, he gives order, that every one lay by him in store. I. Cor. xvi, 2

Upon this subject, the word of God, is sufficiently plain; and surely christians need no other rule to compel them to their duty.

Bonds and calls have often been the cause of murmuring between preachers and people; and appear to me contrary to the spirit of the gospel. II. Cor. ix, 6, 7. “But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart;—so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

#### BELOVED BRETHREN,

Having gone through what I proposed on the subject of government, I shall conclude, by suggesting to you a few ideas, as they may occur to my mind. From the short sketch I have given, I think we must acknowledge, that if we are corrupt and disorderly, it is not owing to any defect in the rules, by which we profess to be governed.



We may see just cause of humiliation, when we take into view the course most of these men have taken, whom we have loved and esteemed as our fathers; who have been instrumental in bringing us to the ground on which we now stand; and by whose hands, God has often given many of us the bread of life. Their report of us is evil; let us bear the stroke without resistance. Let us be always willing to see our own errors, and endeavor to amend. Let us never fight for ourselves; but commit the cause to God. Let us "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." The work of the Lord will not sink. Acts v, 38, 39. And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. The Lord knows who is right, and he will fight the battle

I have expected, for a considerable time, that some of our brethren would leave us. But I entertained a hope, we could part, like brethren; and enjoy occasional fellowship. I mentioned to some of them to this effect—"If we must part, let us part in peace, and live as good neighbors." One of them replied—"That is my mind; let there be no upbraidings."

They complain of errors, and diversity of sentiment. I have no doubt there is some error and diversity of sentiment among us. But I had no idea of as much as they have suggested. Some of the particulars they have mentioned concerning Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, I never recollect to have heard, from any among us.

I am sensible my knowledge of "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, is very imperfect. But I know I love the truth: yet I confess my mind has been sometimes too much on the stretch after things which were of little weight. The knowledge all-important to us, is, to have right views of the holy character and perfections of God; of his will concerning us, and our duty towards him. The love of God is a glorious theme, but I think some of us in time past, have ran to an extreme on that subject, by not keeping sufficiently in view, that altho' "God is love," yet he is a being of tremendous majesty; that he will maintain his righteous government; and finally take vengeance on them, who know not God and obey not his gospel.

They complain farther, that notwithstanding our profession to love christians of every name alike, there are no people more ready to speak hard of other societies, &c. If this is true, with respect to any of us, let us do so no more. I have heard little of this lately, but I can recollect the time when I think some of us did in public speak against certain doctrines, in a manner that was rather offensive than edifying. And in private conversation, the errors we supposed to be in others, were dwelt upon more than was profitable. He is commonly wrong, and actuated by an evil spirit, who is often expatiating on the wrongs of others.

I think also that brother Marshal, and I, and perhaps some others, erred in speaking too severely against creeds and books of discipline, which other dear brethren think necessary and useful. I think the holy scriptures sufficient, and the only foundation, on which the spiritual houshold, or body of Christ can stand united and complete, all fitly compacted and joined together; but she is God's building and God's husbandry, and we must not attempt

to pull down and build up with our own hands ; but walk in love, cultivate the spirit of unity, and let Jesus manage the affairs of his own kingdom.

Human standards of faith and discipline may have their use. But permit me to observe, that when the fire of heaven is kindled and rises to a flame in the church ; when the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of the people by the Holy Ghost, they cannot be confined to sect or party. They overleap all human walls, crying, union, union, with all the lovers of Jesus. The unity of the church is not to be effected by an outcry against human systems and party names ; but by fervent charity and undissembled love. When the glorious revival took place in the Presbyterian church (and particularly in Tennessee) about ten years ago, those engaged in the work had little use for their confession of faith. Their hearts were enlarged to receive christians without respect to sect or name. They united with one accord in calling sinners to repentance, and in earnest prayer to God for their salvation. Young men were sent out on every direction, to exhort or preach the gospel : and though they could neither speak Latin nor Greek, and had but little knowledge of systematic divinity, their labors were owned of God, and attended with a blessing to many precious souls.— Numerous congregations were assembled, composed of people of various denominations. No doubt there was diversity of sentiment among them ; but while they continued in love to one another, and zeal for the cause of God, and spake the simple truth, which they felt in their hearts ; the Lord was with them in power and great glory.

But as soon as they became careful about their rules and standards ; and began to contend for their peculiar tenets ; a declension took place. I know truth is precious : yet no doubt many who fear God

and work righteousness, hold some errors: yea, we are all very imperfect in knowledge; and I suppose all believe some things that are not true. But if the Lord bears with our infirmities, shall we not bear with one another?

Do we not all believe, "that there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus? That there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved? That we must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive his holy spirit, and repent of our sins? That without holiness no man shall see the Lord? And that the finally impenitent shall be punished with an everlasting destruction, from his presence?" Shall we then reject from fellowship, on account of things not expressly revealed, and concerning which honest souls may differ in opinion? Where this contracted, uncharitable spirit prevails, it is marked with deadness and barrenness, the tokens of divine displeasure. Whereas when christians, even of different sects, and different opinions, flow together in love, they are blessed with the smiles of Heaven, and the out-pouring of the spirit of God. The cause of Christ is deeply wounded, by the spirit of intolerance, which often appears in the preachers of the gospel; respecting constructions or opinions, which many feel themselves incapable fully to investigate and understand.

But that soul is safe, who trusts the Lord, who believes what is plainly revealed, and practises what is plainly commanded. Prov. iii, 5, 6. I heard of a brother, of my acquaintance, lately; who had been confined for a considerable time, to a sick bed. I know he formerly had a talent for searching into things which were intricate and abstruse. I was told that in his sickness he used such language as this: "I find a few truths will do a dying man. It

is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. This is enough for me." I will also mention a late remark of a sister in the Lord. Some difficulties being suggested on the subject of atonement, she observed "One thing I know, which satisfies me—He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

When churches were constituted among us, having no other form of discipline than the holy scriptures, we were not only inexperienced, but in a great degree ignorant of the scriptural mode of government; having formerly been governed by other rules. On this account, some difficulties were to be expected. It appears to me, that to the present time, the subject has been too much neglected. This is one principle cause which has contributed to produce the present publication. And I hope that however imperfect it may be, it will be of some use, and at least open the way for farther examination.

I once thought of publishing in connection, with this, a summary of my views on certain doctrines; but I shall omit it at the present crisis, and exhort my brethren to ask help and direction from God. "His arm is not shortened that he cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that he cannot hear."

Notwithstanding the gloomy representation made by our two brethren; upon a serious review, I must say, "the Lord has done great things for us." And I believe if we humbly wait on him, we shall see greater things than these. They say, "our expectations were too high." So far as our expectations were from God, they were not too high. But I do believe some of us, if not all, were too high; and must be brought low. Let us humble ourselves now, under the mighty hand of God, and he shall lift us up.

I feel no disposition to engage in controversy: I have therefore avoided taking particular notice of the statements made, by the brethren Marshal and Thompson. But the following paragraph, which is found in their pamphlet, page 21, I think requires some remarks.

“ But at present we hold our standing, and claim our privilege in the connexion in which we have stood for these past years. We certainly have the privilege of preaching when and where we please; whenever there is an opening for it in the body; as others who differ from us in doctrine—and of communing with them, if we wish it. Those who belong to no particular sect, but to the general body of Christ, who give free invitations to christians of every denomination, cannot certainly refuse us this. If we should enter some church, that excludes the members of this connexion, or if we should form a body of our own, and exclude them, then we would be separated from this body, but not before.”

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\* *I will state a case for illustration:—A disaffected wife being determined to leave her husband, in order to justify herself in so doing, reports that her husband is a bad man; that she has lost all hopes of his reformation; and thinks it unsafe to continue with him in the conjugal relation. But for the present she holds her standing in his house, as wife, mistress and governess, and will do so until she can find another home; and claims the privilege of cohabiting with her husband, if she wishes it. She pleads that from the tenor of the marriage covenant, he cannot refuse her this. If she should marry another man, which she fully intends, then they would be separated, but not before.*

What they mean or intend by holding their standing and claiming their privilege, I know not. There can be no union upon gospel principles, without the unity of the spirit. By their own showing, this bond is broken. In the next paragraph, the following words "*such a corrupt and shattered church,*" are used by them, and applied to the people with whom they just before claim the privilege of communion. They have commenced open hostility against us, and have represented us to the world in the most opprobrious light, even beyond hope of reformation. By their own public act, they have raised a bar in the way of fellowship; and until such concessions are made, on the one part or the other, that that bar can be removed and fellowship restored, we are separated. And whatever ideas they may have of external connexion, upon gospel principles, I see no foundation for their claim.

It is true, as they state, we give free invitations to christians of every denomination; but upon this very principle, that they are one in spirit, united in bonds of love. We do not shut the door which Christ has opened; but give opportunity to his disciples to obey their Lord's command.

We give such invitations, that those christians in other regular societies, who are desirous to have fellowship with us, may enjoy their privilege; because we believe they are our fathers' children, and we are all one in Christ Jesus. According to the position taken, as above stated, a person may villify and reproach a church, and then claim, as a matter of right, the privilege of communion. Upon reading the pamphlet aforesaid, the idea was fully received by me respecting the authors: *they are separated* from us. The paragraph I have cited, surprised me; but in my view, does not alter the case.

Paul speaks of some who had forsaken him ; we have no account that he followed them with decrees of suspension or excommunication. And had they returned in the spirit of meekness and love, according to the gospel, he would no doubt have gladly received them. Upon this principle, and no other, do I conceive those men can expect to be received by us. With their own hands, they have put the bar in the way, which virtually makes a separation ; and we must so remain, until such a change takes place either in them or in us, that we can be united.

I do not mean by these remarks, to charge those men with impure motives. Let us not judge, but commit the matter to the judge of all the earth, who will do right. Whatever our opinion may be, as to their statements, let us not censure them. I believe they think themselves correct. "But, ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God."

*Finis.*

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