

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters to a Young Preacher.

LETTER XXV. CHURCH DISCIPLINE: ERRONEOUS SENTIMENT.

My Dear Brother,—

It has invariably been an established principle among Baptists, that no man ought to be persecuted, or subjected to any temporal disadvantage, on account of his religious views. But a regard for gospel truth, and the exercise of scriptural discipline, which deprive no man of any of his rights, are not to be regarded as persecution.—Those persons who become members of our churches, do so voluntarily, and profess to regard our sentiments as accordant with Scripture.—Any individual, however, who may subsequently come to the conclusion, that the views of some other denomination are more consonant with the sacred Oracles than ours, is at liberty, so far as we are concerned, to leave us, and unite with that body. But it is reasonably expected of all who remain in our connexion, that they continue to adhere to the sentiments which we hold.

Some diversity of opinion among members of the same church is undoubtedly allowable. This evidently existed in some of the first churches. In such cases the Apostle Paul enjoined mutual forbearance. Converts from Judaism might continue to observe circumcision and other Jewish rites; but they must not enforce the observance of these upon converts from heathenism. (Acts xv. 24, 28, 29. xxi. 20, 25. Rom. xiv. 1—6, 14, 15. 1 Cor. viii. 8—13. Gal. ii. 3—5.) It appears consistent, therefore, that differences of sentiment which affect neither the vitals of Christianity, nor the discharge of Christian duty, should be tolerated, provided those who dissent from the views of the body do not raise contentions. If they do this, the Apostle's injunction will apply to their case, "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them."—(Rom. xvi. 17.) This necessarily implies their exclusion.

Persons who hold sentiments subversive of the gospel of Christ should not be received into a Christian church; neither should they be retained when known to entertain such views. A denial of the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit, or of His influence in regeneration and sanctification, of justification by faith, or any such important point of doctrine, is a sufficient reason for rejection or exclusion. The Apostle John says of him that "abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." (2 John 9, 10, 11. John v. 23.) Of course we must not receive him into our Church, nor allow such a one to remain therein. The man who is not aware of the dignity of the Divine Spirit, and of His renewing operations, shews himself to be "sensual, having not the Spirit," and consequently a stranger to grace, and unfit for church-membership. (Jude 19. John xiv. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 14.) Of those who insisted on the observance of circumcision and the ceremonial law as indispensable to salvation, and consequently in effect denied "that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," (Rom. iii. 28.) Paul says, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." (Gal. v. 12.) It is not to be imagined that the Apostle wished these men to be consigned to misery, or removed by death, (which would evince a persecuting spirit) but to be cut off from fellowship with the churches, lest their pernicious leaven should diffuse itself through the whole mass.—(Compare ver. 9, 1 Cor. v. 5—7, 13. 2 Tim. ii. 16—18.)

With reference to such persons, in general, as become "subverted" in their views, and are drawn away through the influence of erroneous sentiments, the Apostle gives an explicit direction, "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition reject." (Titus iii. 10, 11. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.) Hence it is evident, that repeated efforts should be employed to reclaim those who depart from the simplicity of gospel truth; but that if these prove unavailing, exclusion must follow. The interests of truth, and the welfare of the body, require it.

Some have imagined that when a man's views become so changed that he is about to unite with another denomination, we ought to give him a dismission. But a dismission, which is properly given when a member of one church is removing into the bounds of another church of the same faith and order, is a certificate, that the party receiving it is in full fellowship with the body, being accordant with it in sentiment, as well as moral in conduct. It recognizes the individual as still

belonging to the church whence it is received, till united with another of the same denomination. It consequently can not be given, with any shew of consistency, to one who is withdrawing from the body. Indeed, by his withdrawal he in effect excludes from his fellowship the church of which he has been a member. What, then, can he expect, but that the church will also withdraw fellowship from him? The party that moves first in the separation seems more justly chargeable with persecution than the other.—The fact is, however, there is no persecution in the case; and there shall be no unkind words, nor any unfriendly feeling, on either side.

In concluding my advice to you, my dear young Brother, with regard to the instructions which you should impart relative to Church Discipline, I would entreat you to be ever on your guard, and to caution your brethren, against all appearance of partiality. (1 Tim. v. 21. James ii. 1—6.) In decisions unanimity is very desirable. If, however, this can not be attained, the minority should acquiesce in a vote passed by a majority of the male members. But such a majority, if the case be not plain, and the preponderance large, will, in most instances, act wisely by deferring to take action till their brethren generally become satisfied on the point. The exercise of discipline requires much prudence, with a combination of gentleness and firmness. May you ever be "steadfast in the truth," "speak the things which become sound doctrine," and be successful in preserving others, and in reclaiming where needful, from the insidious phases of pernicious error unhappily prevalent in our day.

Yours in gospel bonds,

CHARLES TUPPER.

Tremont, Aylesford, Dec. 31st, 1861.

ERRATA.—In Letter xxiii. C. M. Dec. 25, 1861, p. 413, paragraph 2, for "Matth. xvii." read *Matth. xviii.*; for "inference there," read *inference therefore*. Par. 3, for "transgression," read *transgressor*.

For the Christian Messenger.

[The following letter will, perhaps, be thought by some to be rather lengthy for our columns. It contains some repetitions of what has appeared before in our pages, but as these are required to illustrate the writer's argument, and as we have no desire to mutilate its contents by eliminating these, or separating it into two parts, we give it verbatim. Our readers will use their own judgment in reference to its sentiments, as they do on all other subjects. We will just remark however, that the writer is not one of "those Yankees" as some might suppose, but a genuine Nova Scotian.—ED.]

Mason and Slidell.

I adopt the above caption, as perhaps the most likely to attract attention to what I am about to say, not because I expect to confine myself to the late affair of the *Trent*. I thus seek some notice for my pen at this time not, however, because I expect to write any thing *signally* worthy of attention, nor because I am ambitious to fill a column or two for the public eye, but solely from the conviction that my subject is a truly momentous one, combined with the apprehension that some of my statements will be distasteful to certain of those whose eyes may light upon them,—through this caption, but otherwise might not.

I am sorry for the nation, of which I still count it a distinguished blessing and honor to form a unit; for "England, with all thy faults, I love thee still, and I can feel thy follies too;" I am sorry for Nova Scotia, that resort to any sensation expedient, should seem to me desirable and necessary at the present time, in order to gain a hearing in Nova Scotia for the cause of our Northern American neighbors. I say I am sorry for my nation and my country, yes, there have been times of late when I could have almost shed tears of burning shame at the ignoble voices, which have suffered themselves to speak and may still be heard croaking, in England and her colonies, about the war in America. Some of my readers may sneeringly, others commiseratingly smile at this, but ere many months pass, "the tables may be turned" on such. The course of events is surely indicating no distant disappointment to others, than six or eight hundred millions of traitorous rebels in the American nation. Candid and intelligent minds, outside as well as in that Republic, have seen during these weeks of "strange times," Freedom—freedom to both the black and white slaves of America, gradually it may be, but most hopefully, wending her triumphant march Northward and Southward over those once and again-to-be United States. And even plotting rebels, ignorant blusterers, and selfish croakers, there is good reason to believe, are coming to feel troublesome apprehension that Providence is about to confirm, with terrible judgments, the foregone verdict of their guilty consciences, that the cause they have been abetting, *vi et armis, ore tenus, or through mer-*

cenary newspapers, is a wicked cause; and their ignoble schemes and windy threatnings and prophesying on its behalf are about to turn out in very truth, like the baseless fabric of a vision, "leaving"—ah would the stanza could be all truthfully quoted as applicable to their case,—"leaving not a wreck behind."

"But the political skies of England and the Northern States are now portending certain and imminent war, which once begun, will give speedy triumph to the Southern Rebellion." So especially the blind astrologers of King Cotton's dominions have been for days past, willingly "discerning the face of those skies;" so also, it must be confessed, unselfish, enlightened, and moderate men have of late been fearing. But how groundless have proved these prophecies and apprehensions. Already the blood-red and lowering horizon is "clearing away." Over the Telegraph-wires has come the announcement that the President and Cabinet at Washington have promptly decided to give up Messrs Mason and Slidell with their Secretaries, to the protection of the British flag.

And now must not those who have with manifest satisfaction been prophesying war between England and "the Yankees" feel somewhat of shame and chagrin? Who have proved themselves the fools? Who have acted the nobler part—the blusterers of England, her Colonies, and of America; or the Federal Cabinet and the sensible peace,—desiring subjects of Abraham Lincoln? Ah the "Yankees" as they so often are contemptuously called, are yet capable of doing a magnanimous thing. They have at the present time, with a few weightless exceptions, shown themselves magnanimous, ready to listen to reason and carefully to consult for peace, even at the expense of a temporary mortification of national pride. Although Captain Wilkes executed his duty, "in form" rather than "in substance" an admission now made in the "English Thunderer," although that gallant officer, in his recent act, overstepped international law and usage, only by seizing certain traitorous men instead of the ship and officers conveying them; on discovering such transgression the Government at Washington, and it will soon appear that the body of the people of the Northern States are as honorably disposed—make prompt and ample reparation. On the other hand, if the legality of Capt. Wilkes' recent capture could not have been disproved in any sense, not less magnanimous undoubtedly would they have shown themselves, in refusing to "yield to any bullying infringement of their rights as belligerents," whether by the British Government or any other government or nation. Are any of us inclined to believe that our American neighbors would hesitate between tamely suffering and unflinchingly resisting—to their life-blood, if need be, a wrong done to their national honor? Sufficient provocation on this score would, it may well be believed, speedily dissipate such taunting conjectures on our part. The American Revolution may well remind England that her precocious American children will continue to maintain their rights, though at the expense of their last drop of Puritan blood. I say advisedly Puritan blood, for it still flows in their veins, faint-hearted, inglorious Bull Run retreat notwithstanding. (But here let me say that, having personally talked with a brave soldier who was on that battle-ground on the 31st July last, I do not believe it has been or can be shown that the troops of the Federal army merit half the reproachful sneers which they have received since that disastrous Sunday encounter. Egregious blunders and wrongs were committed by those at Washington, who incited and planned the action of the Federal army on that now notorious day, and many of the officers, during that battle, were guilty of most dastardly conduct; but, that the Federal soldiers, those of them who were really led, or led themselves into the fight, or irregular skirmishes of that day, fought with rarely persistent bravery there is every reasonable evidence for believing. That they were, from long and "double-quick" marching, and from little gating, well-nigh exhausted before reaching the scene of conflict, truth accords to them; that they nevertheless fought *all day*, and against greater numbers and military advantages, for example, choice of ground, masked batteries, facts also demand belief; that they, in the face of such odds and disadvantages, made fearful havoc in the Southern army, the well-known fact that the Southern soldiers did not pursue their retreating foes, as well as the statement, by reliable men from the South, that the Rebels admit their Bull Run loss to have been between *three and four thousands*, most convincingly proves. Now these facts are "stubborn things," and remembering that the Northern army of that day was composed of three-months' men, nearly all of whom had never been engaged in a battle be-

fore, surely the "Old World" should be a little less lavish than she has been of her Bull Run taunts.)

But to return to the Mason and Slidell arrest, how much of all that has been "said and done" about that affair has been "sound and fury, signifying nothing." To be sure Capt. Wilkes' seizure, in itself, touches points of very grave importance, questions involving far-reaching consequences. It seemed too, to be an illegal and high-handed act. Interpreted according to the letter of the law, it was, as already remarked, an unlawful proceeding; but it now appears not to have been intended by Capt. Wilkes as a high-handed act. In his official account of the affair, recently submitted, it comes out that prior to his interception of those *quasi ambassadors* he "carefully examined all the authorities on international law, to which he had access, viz.: Kent, Wheaton, Vattel, besides various decisions of Sir Wm. Scott, and other judges of the Admiralty Court of Great Britain, which bore upon the rights of neutrals and their responsibilities.—And as to the right of the Federal Government of the United States to avail themselves at the present time of international laws and usages, which the English correspondent of the *Messenger*, and others, have doubted, if not denied, here Capt. W. did not act rashly or unadvisedly, but gave that question due consideration, and took tenable ground, as the following paragraph from his late letter to the Sec. of the U. S. A. will show: "The governments of Great Britain, France, and Spain, having issued Proclamations that the Confederate States were viewed, considered, and treated as belligerents, and knowing that the ports of Great Britain, France, Spain, and Holland, and the West Indies, were open to their vessels, and that they were admitted to all the courtesies and protection, vessels of the United States received, every aid and attention being given them proved clearly that *they* (the italics are mine) "acted upon this view and decision, and brought them within the international law of search and under the responsibilities."—(Capt. W's *synopsis*, it must be admitted, requires some re-construction.) He then adds that "the question arose in my mind whether I had the right to capture the persons of these Commissioners. * * * Written dispatches are expressly referred to in all authorities, subjecting the vessel to seizure and condemnation if the Captain had the knowledge of their being on board. But these gentlemen were not dispatches in the literal sense, * * * and nowhere could I find a case in point. * * * I then considered them as the *embodiment* of dispatches, and as * * * I became satisfied that their mission was adverse and criminal to the Union, it therefore became my duty to arrest their progress and capture them, if they had no passports or papers from the Federal government, as provided for under the law of nations, viz.: "That foreign ministers of a belligerent on board of neutral ships are required to possess papers from the other belligerent to permit them to pass free."

"There can be no doubt he," (the Capt. of the *Trent*) "knew they were carrying highly important dispatches, and were endowed with instructions inimical to the United States. This rendered his vessel (a neutral) a good prize; and I determined to take possession of her, and send her to Key West for adjudication, where I am well satisfied she would have been condemned for carrying these persons, and for resisting to be searched. That this was Capt. Wilkes' original intention is confirmed by his orders to Lieutenant Fairfax for the arrest of Messrs. Mason and Slidell; in the course of which instructions occurs the following sentence: "Should Mr. Mason, Mr. Slidell, Mr. Eustis, and Mr. Macfarland be on board, you will make them prisoners, and send them on board this ship immediately, and take possession of her as a prize." But he adds: "I forbore to seize her, however, in consequence of my being so reduced in officers and crew, and the derangement it would cause innocent persons, there being a great number of passengers for Europe" &c.

Now does not the latter of these reasons indicate something far different from a high-handed course of action on the part of Capt. Wilkes?—Ought not the passengers of the *Trent* to thank their stars that they in this instance fell into the hands of so magnanimous a man? They were well-nigh at his mercy for the time. The ship, with entire cargo, English authorities admit, the Capt. of the *San Jacinto* might have seized and carried into a process of law, by which the whole would have probably been condemned. For my part I heartily wish Capt W. had been in a condition to capture the *Trent*. Her officers richly merited such seizure. They were acting in open and daring defiance of a late proclamation of our noble Queen.

But is war between Great Britain and Ameri-