

CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

SAINT JOHN, FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 1849.

PASTOR'S DUTY

WITH REFERENCE TO DISCIPLINE.

Great evils, sometimes grow out of honest efforts to exercise and maintain discipline in the church of Christ. This in the minds of some is an argument against discipline; and in many cases discipline is relaxed, through fear of what evils might arise from its exercise, till it is next to impossible to restore a healthy tone of order and purity.

Scripture and reason however both teach the necessity of discipline; and the fact just stated shows the necessity of having all things done "decently and in order." There must certainly be a way of accomplishing successfully all the divine precepts; the lack of legislative wisdom which leaves so many human laws in an impracticable form never characterised the legislator for the Christian Church. "In Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The evil is not in the law, but in the manner of its application or execution or in the disposition of those to whom its execution is committed, when the order and harmony of a church are marred in the process of discipline.

The Pastor's responsibility in this particular we consider to be very great, and we fear there is often great delinquency; we do not mean by design, but from want of consideration on their part.

Churches too are disposed inconsiderately often to put their Pastor in a position with reference to their discipline which will inevitably injure his usefulness, and which often tends to a speedy dissolution of the pastoral relation. Some would make him a sort of prosecuting attorney; complaints are lodged with him, and he is expected to commence a suit—to arraign individuals and take a prominent part in the investigation of offences. Others would make him the jury, and shrink from all the responsibility of the verdict by leaving it with the Pastor to say guilty or not guilty. He will be expected by others to become counsel for defence, or in some way a partisan; then of course in case of controversy there must be a party opposed to the Pastor; and human nature, especially under the excitement of passion, is hardly to be trusted in such circumstances; and we may reckon with great certainty that the suitability of the Pastor will be the next question, and many chances to one, though a meagre minority may commence the agitation, the dissolution of the relation will follow.

We cannot think that any scriptural allusion to pastoral "rule" or "authority" will justify such an implication of the Pastor in the controversies and contests which may arise in church discipline; indeed we regard this an entire departure from the excellent system of government and discipline commended in the New Testament. There we see the wisdom and faithfulness of the Church exercised in the investigation of offences, and the authority and influence of the Church in the verdict; in other words, discipline is the function of the Church, not of the Pastor, nor Deacons, nor Committee; and the nearer our practice conforms to this theory the more salutary and safe will be its exercise.

Wherein then consists the special responsibility of a Pastor in this matter? As we conceive, in expounding truly and faithfully Christ's laws. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." This is a general proposition. The Pastor's office makes it incumbent upon him to teach the law—"all things whatsoever Christ has commanded."

It is not for him, nor for the church to make the law, nor to alter the law, nor to question the expediency of the law; but he is to know and teach what Christ has made to be law, and inculcate a due observance of it. Confidence in Christ as a legislator, and in the scriptures as a complete summary of Faith and Practice, and acquiescence in Christ's supremacy would greatly simplify the discipline of churches. It is seldom that a protracted controversy is maintained upon the plain question of offence; but it is usually upon that which men have no right to controvert—upon what Christ has already settled by statute; it is, though perhaps not expressed in so many words, upon the justice or expediency of the law, or the expediency of enforcing it.

Surely this betrays a lack of faithful preaching; Christ's character, office and authority are not well understood. The gospel fully and simply preached will effect a conviction to be easily set aside, that

Christ's words are law—that his laws must govern the church or it is no longer his church—that this will secure an exact administration of justice, and leave no room for favoritism.

When this subject is well understood, and upon it certainly depends the purity and peace of a church, discipline will be indispensable; no church will dare neglect it; the force of opinion in a community will demand it; and its just and scriptural verdict will inevitably be sustained.

The Pastor will no longer be tempted from his proper position to urge on a reluctant discipline, but the church will have confidence to do its own work.

In its administration every individual accused has a right to a defence; to meet his accuser before his brethren; to hear the evidence adduced against himself, and if possible exonerate himself from the charge. All this should be at his option. If he will not avail himself of it, as is sometimes the case, the church having no power to enforce his presence, their action ought not to be deferred; where its authority is thus contemned or defied, its position is indeed critical, and unless a proper and faithful enforcement of its authority is exercised, the power to do so will soon be gone.

It is for the Pastor, presiding over the deliberations of the church during this investigation, to see that an accused person has every proper opportunity afforded him to sustain his character and standing; and to lay the law of Christ touching the case fairly before all. If the investigation substantiates the offence, it is his duty to read Christ's mind in regard to the penalty, and all discussion should here cease. The church has exercised its full discretion in bringing the investigation to this issue: now the great Lawgiver and head of the church is to exercise his prerogative, which he has never delegated to Pastor or church, and to say by written statute what the penalty shall be. Disputant and controversy will then be not against church or Pastor, but Christ and his law, and no room will be left for faction to sympathise with transgression.

Now such an even-handed administration of church discipline we conceive must depend not upon a fearless and rigorous prosecution of individual offences on the part of the Pastor; but upon a faithful exhibition of the truth, that shall keep the church well informed of its duties and responsibilities, and herein as we conceive, lays the special duty of a Pastor with reference to discipline.

DIOCESAN CHURCH SOCIETY.

Quite an agitation we observe is in progress in regard to the last meeting of the Diocesan Church Society, and the books upon the shelves of its Library, especially the Companion to the Prayer Book. The exceptions against the latter book are made to rest upon certain papal errors inculcated in it, but from all the extracts we have seen we should think it a right worthy companion to the Prayer Book, and without commending either of the books, must certainly acknowledge the consistency of those who cleave to both. Of the zeal for the truth on the part of those who have such a disgust for the genuflexions and idle ceremonies or the saving works of Puseyism, and yet are blind to the enormous evils growing out of the prayer book doctrine of Baptism and the Burial service, we can say but little. We know of no greater errors; none more fatal to those who embrace them in the whole system of Popery than those so assiduously taught in the Catechism of the Church of England. The first rite performed upon the infant is a fraud upon the faith and intelligence of a christian, and must be perpetuated as soon as the child can say, "My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." To build a child's faith and hope on such a foundation, and require its repetition and confession in confirmation, and then expect an evangelical faith and godly life as the consequence is preposterous; and if the defender of the Companion of the Prayer Book is only ingenuous enough to use the argument ad hominem we think none could fail to see that to be a consistent churchman, a man must be a Puseyite, and no argument can be carried to its legitimate conclusion against the latter which will not when turned against the former fall as heavily upon him.

The caution of the press in their notice of the controversy is certainly no very flattering compliment to the grave men engaged in it, and

if a churchman we should expect no good to arise from it.

Having called upon J. Howe, Esquire, the Deputy Post Master General, during the past week, and represented several irregularities in the delivery of the Visitor in different places, we received every assurance that anything of the kind if reported to him should be attended to at once. If after this the packages are not left properly in the boxes at Sussex Upper Settlement, and at Price's Corner, and if the bundle for Johnston does not reach its destination, we hope it will be immediately reported. We have every confidence in Mr. Howe, who desires to be informed when irregularities occur, that such representations will be immediately attended to and rectified.

The papers for Post Offices on the Saint John, are sent off by mail Friday, p. m., four and-a-half o'clock. For Saint George, and the West Saturday, a. m., seven and-a-half o'clock. For the Halifax route Saturday, p. m., three o'clock.

COLONIAL PROTESTANT.—We regret to see by the March number of this Monthly periodical, that its further publication is suspended for want of patronage. It has been ably conducted and has fulfilled the promise of its proprietors.

ERROR.—At the head of page 77—SEAMEN'S FRIEND—for Rev. W. Dawson read Rev. S. C. Damon.

LETTERS RECEIVED.—Mark Young, with remittance; Mrs. Keith, do.; J. Blakeney.

ACCIDENT.—We regret to state that Mr. D. Caldwell, of this City, Mail Contractor, in carrying the Canada Mail to Halifax on Tuesday last, lost three of his best horses in the ice on the Kennebeckasis river.—*New Brunswick.*

Correspondence.

The following excellent sentiments, and so happily expressed are from a young man baptized a short time since, now absent from his home to his brother. We wish they could be indelibly impressed upon the minds of a host of young men in this Province who are allowing their heads to be turned by idle fancies of professional ease, and of suddenly acquired fortunes. No situation in this life will be free from cares and trials, but we are fully persuaded that an industrious farmer, availing himself of the means of information which are daily increasing, and are now brought to every door, so as to become an intelligent man, will command as many of the substantial comforts of life and experience as few of its perplexities as in any other situation or avocation whatever.—*Ed.*

I received a letter from Father a few days ago, and was very glad to hear you were all well, and that he had commenced preaching again. I have heard since that he is very zealously engaged in the ministry and that his labours are being abundantly blessed. I would conclude from this that the management of the farm will in a great measure devolve upon you, since he will be called away from home a good part of his time. I need not urge upon you the importance of being diligent, industrious and attentive, and vigilant in looking after the concerns of the farm. Let farming be your study and delight, and remember that an industrious, intelligent and independent farmer is one of the most respectable men a community can boast of.

My present situation is, as you may have been informed, in a neighbourhood composed chiefly of independent farmers, and a more interesting, comfortable and happy people I have never before lived among; but I observe they are industrious, and make farming their sole business."

In transmitting the brief obituary found in another column, a brother writes after noticing the revivals and recent baptisms at Hillsborough, that—

"A revival has also commenced amongst the people in the upper part of Moncton, under the labours of Elder Hart: I have heard there have been seven baptized by him, and the work is still spreading; and the Lord grant that revivals may continue to spread, till the whole earth is filled with the glory of God."

Our brother will see that we have attended to his suggestions, and we trust there will be no further occasion of complaint.

Extract from a letter of Rev. S. T. RAND, to the Christian Messenger.

Charlottetown, March 1, 1848.

DEAR BRETHREN,—

"It is only echoing what you hear from every other quarter, to say, that the pecuniary affairs of the Island are, at present, in a very depressed state. Business is at a stand, labourers cannot get employment, and those who have produce to sell can get but little for it. Meanwhile notice is being given by thy Merchants, that all duties not paid within such a time will be enforced. Lawsuits are going forward, the poor people are oppressed and discouraged, and it is supposed that some hundreds will leave the Island as soon as they can get away. Where they can go to improve their circumstances, is a question. Several of our members, and those, too, most able to contribute to the support of the cause, have left C. Town. Under these circumstances I do not see but Christian Editors, as well as Ministers and others, must bear a large amount of the burden; and they must exhibit the power of their principles, by "doing more than others." In the meantime, while intemperance is devastating the country, and bringing down the wrath of heaven upon us, and while multitudes are on the point of starving for bread, a project is on foot to establish a *Brewing Company* on the Island, with a capital of £10,000, stg. A prospectus has been forwarded from Scotland to the Governor of this Island and various influential individuals, asking their concurrence and influence. It proposes "immense advantages" to the Island.—Ale, in abundance they will furnish at one-third the present cost. They will destroy every week some hundreds of bushels of grain and calculate that a clear profit of £75, weekly, will accrue to the Company. They propose establishing Agents for the sale of the "poison" in Halifax, and all the principal towns in British North America, so that Satan and his emissaries may have full employ in all those Provinces; and they declare that judging from "the trade" in the Mother Country, nothing at present presents so cheering a prospect as such an establishment. They do not even except the Californian Gold Mines. Here then is a fine field for the operations of the "Sons of Temperance." Most devoutly do I hope that no man on the Island will be either foolish or wicked enough to give the project any countenance; but by the Prospectus, which I have read, very sanguine expectations are entertained by its projectors.

The Census of the Island has just been taken, and an abstract of it published in the Royal Gazette. I shall forward a copy to Prof. Chipman, who is interested in all such matters. The total number of inhabitants is, 62,678. Increase since 1841, 15,644. The proportion of the different Denominations, is as follows, viz: Episcopalians, 6530; Free Church, 4071; Kirk of Scotland, 9835; Presbytery of P. E. Island, 6436; Catholics, 27,147; Methodists, 3659; Baptists, 2900; Bible Christians, 1275; Jews 1. There is only one of the children of Abraham, it seems, on the Island. The only one I ever saw to my knowledge. He resides at present at St. Eleanor. I had the pleasure, during my late tour, of making his acquaintance, and of taking part in the interesting ceremony whereby he was initiated into the Order of the Sons of Temperance, and installed into office. But, to return to my figures. Quakers, 1. (His name is Marshall, he resides in De Sable; is a man of wealth, unmarried, has a splendid house, and our horses found the comforts of his barn on our recent tour—and I shewed my ignorance of the English language and got laughed at by my companions, for wondering that they should give the horses *corn* instead of *oats*—while we were enjoying the hospitality of a brother of his, who is a Methodist and a very worthy man.) Universalists 12, (just one dozen too many); Mormons, 61; Unitarians, 6; other Denominations, 250; *Nothingarians*, 104.—The Baptists, according to the Census, have increased about fifty per cent since 1841.—There are 330 Indians on the Island. Can you tell me how many there are supposed to be in Nova Scotia and Cape Berton.

We are pleased to learn that the revival at Bill town is still progressing. Previous to last Lords day above fifty persons had been baptised since the protracted meeting which that church commenced.—*Ch. Messenger.*

Baptist Missionary Society.

Our friends in England are in a state of some excitement. It has been proposed to procure a Royal Charter of Incorporation for