

THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

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New Testament Studies.

NO. XXXII.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

Addenda.

The word *addenda* means, things to be added. We fill up our space this week with certain miscellaneous items, which we want to add to our discussion on church-discipline. We begin with the practical remark, that the matter of church-discipline belongs to the churches as much as to their officers. This is plain from the following passages: "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.—In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ when ye [the Corinthian church] are gathered together." Will our readers now turn for themselves to Matt. xviii. 18-20? This passage certainly does not mean what Rome would have it mean when she pleads it in support of her despotic claims. But it does mean, that wherever Christ's people are gathered together as a church, to execute discipline, in obedience to his laws, and of a regard to his name, he himself is with them, to preside over their action, and to attach to it, so far as it is conformed to His will, His sacred seal. It follows, that our Lord expects his churches to co-operate with their officers in the exercise of a Christian discipline, and not to leave the whole weight of this matter, in its responsibility, and in its occasional odium, to rest upon their leaders. We fear that this is not always remembered. And who can recount the alienations and mischiefs which have thus arisen? and the mischiefs too which have arisen from that neglect of discipline into which men have been betrayed from a fear of the results here indicated?

We now pass to some extracts taken from Circular Letters addressed to the churches of the Western Baptist Association, England, in the latter half of the last century. They indicate a sadly low condition of morals in some of the members of those churches. They supply matter for thankfulness and hope; since we have reason to know, that English Baptist churches in this century do not tolerate such things as should seem to have been uncommon with the churches of the last century. They show also, that there was a demand for discipline in those churches which scarcely seems to have been exercised. Here is one of these extracts: "As immoralities generally either originate in, or are greatly promoted by intemperance in drinking, we desire such as are at times overtaken by this fault to consider what may be said on this subject: and may the Lord enable you to lay aside this abominable and destructive evil! Your sin consists in your complying with either your own inclination or others' temptation to drink intoxicating liquors to excess! It is granted, that neither an ill-natured report, nor the private suspicion of men, nor a compulsion of body, are any certain proof of your guilt. (Matt. xi. 19. Acts ii. 13. 1 Sam. i. 13.) But we think your frequent desire to drink in private, your many contrivances to come at liquor unknown to your friends, your repeatedly swallowing it after your true thirst is allayed, and your shameful excuse and falsehood to cover your sin after you have committed it, too plainly prove before God and your own conscience that you are guilty. Among many ways wherein men glory in their shame, this is sometimes one, viz: to boast of their ability to outdrink others; as if that which offends God, which forfeits heaven, and which proves to all around that one's self is an old offender, should be deemed a privilege!... It is evidential of a sinful state, and portentive of a dismal end, when professors of religion choose their company and connections rather as promotive of each others' carnal amusement than their holiness; and had rather sit for hours together with their bottle before them to excite their lust than so many minutes with their Bible before them to mortify it."

Here is a farther extract: "Beware also of a conformity to the world in its vanities and follies. 'Ye are not of the world,' saith Christ of his disciples. 'Be ye not conformed to this world,' is the advice of the Great Apostle. Have these passages been read by those who conform to this world, in order, as they pretend, to recommend religion? What! run into the wild extremes of dress and fashion, attend cards, dice, balls, plays, midnight revels, to make religion look handsome! (What! make the sons of darkness your companions and squander away your time with them in taverns, ale-houses, and such-like places, to render Christianity lovely, and win them to the ways of God! How absurd! Such professions are too much like the silly mariner, who, first chaining his bark to a rock, put off to sea, hoping, by virtue of the chain, that the rock would follow him. But, alas! the contrary effect ensued, and his vessel was dashed to pieces.... How profane is the conduct of those who spend a great part of the Sabbath in sleep, casting up their accounts, transacting worldly business, or in casual conversation! How criminal the proceedings of such as cannot be prepared for the business of the day till they have had their hair-dresser to attend them in the morning, and then go to the house of God (or elsewhere) only to make a fair appearance! How cruel and guilty are those who occasion their servants to complain, that they have more to do on the Sabbath than on many other days in the week; while their masters and mistresses, slighting the Lord of hosts, hold a sacrifice to another god, which is their belly, and must receive their visitors in form! Brethren, avoid such errors, and keep your Sabbaths holy unto the Lord."

It is a striking comment upon the above extracts, that the churches thus admonished made but slow progress. Thus, in the year 1769, twenty-nine churches reported a clear increase of twenty-nine members; that is, one per church. In 1771, thirty churches reported no increase at all. In 1780, approaching the period to which the above extracts refer, thirty-five churches reported a clear increase of five; that is, scarcely one-eighth, a mere fraction per church. How should it have been otherwise? It is otherwise now through the whole area covered by the Western Association, now divided into several associations; and yet there is room,—as when will there not be?—for great improvement in every way.

We add to the above extracts another, taken from the Circular Letter of the Nova Scotia Eastern Baptist Association for 1863. It is quite a painful one. It tends to justify, however, some remarks to which exception was lately taken in the columns of the *Visitor* and *Messenger*. It proves also, that our churches in these Lower Provinces really do need to be taught and stirred up in regard to their obligations to an unflinching execution of the laws of Christ in his own house. Here is the extract:—"Indifference to certain sins that have been of long standing in the church, and are almost looked upon as constitutional, or winked at as infirmities and weaknesses, has an injurious effect, and tends to neutralize the influence of the Gospel. The use of intoxicating drink as a beverage by church members, being the source of so many sins, should be considered, in our opinion, deserving the censure of all who love the Zion of our God, and pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. The disposition of the apostle is desirable. If most men my brother to offend, I will at none while this world standeth." Others sins of a damaging character may also be referred to. Cases, we believe, may be found where professed Christians, if not actually entering into the evil work, yet countenance and approve of such a course. Reference is now had

to those who mingle with the attendants at the ball-room, the race-course, the circus, and the theatre; to which may be added, gambling in its various forms. And as for covetousness, the forms in which it appears among us are legion." The influence and power that certain church members possess seem to give liberty to sin, and trample under foot the laws by which they should be governed. Wealth, power, position, should never be allowed to interfere with the exercise of Gospel discipline; and churches should not be influenced by them to retain members who are disorderly in conduct, irregular in practice, and unscriptural in doctrine."

We close with a deeply instructive incident, which occurred in the experience of Andrew Fuller. He was at Aberdeen, Scotland, collecting for the Baptist Mission. On his way, one Lord's Day morning, to meet a few Baptist brethren residing in that city, "I was called aside," says he, "by a respectable minister, and told to this effect,—You will be requested to baptize a woman before you leave Aberdeen. I have no prejudice against her on account of her being a Baptist; but I think it my duty to tell you, that she was a member of one of our churches in this neighborhood, and was excluded for bad conduct."—"What conduct?"—"Disobedience towards her creditors."—"Very well. I thank you for the information, and will make a proper use of it." In the evening of that day Mr. Fuller had a conversation with this woman, which he thus reports:

"Well, Margaret, you have lived in the world about forty years. How long do you think you have known Christ?"—"A little more than a year."—"What, no longer?"—"I think not."—"And have you never professed to know him before that time?"—"Yes; and was a member of an Independent church for several years."—"A member of a church, and did not know Christ! How was that?"—"I was brought up to be religious, and deceived myself and others in professing to be so."—"And how came you to leave that church?"—"I was cut off."—"What, because you were a Baptist?"—"No; because of my bad conduct."—"Of what, then, had you been guilty?"—"My heart was lifted up with vanity. I got in debt for clothes, and other things; and then prevaricated, and did many bad things."—"And it was for these things they cut you off?"—"Yes!"—"And do you think they did right?"—"Oh yes!"—"And how came you to the knowledge of Christ at last?"—"When I was cut off from the church I sunk into the deepest despondency. I felt as an outcast from God and man. I wandered about, speaking, as it were, to nobody, and nobody speaking to me. My burden seemed heavier than I could bear. At that time a passage or two of Scripture came to my mind; and I was led to see that through the cross of Christ there was mercy for the chief of sinners. I wept much, and my sin was very bitter. But I saw there was no reason to despair; for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse from all unrighteousness. It is from thence I date my conversion."—"And do the minister, and the church of which you were a member know of all this?"—"Yes!"—"Why did you not go, and confess it before them, and be restored?"—"Partly because I have removed my situation some miles from them; and partly because I felt in my conscience that I was a Baptist."—"After the conversation," concludes Mr. Fuller, "I saw the minister who had told me of her, and informed him of the whole; adding, that the church in his connection had done well in excluding Margaret, and the Lord, I hoped, had blessed it to her salvation. He could not object to the propriety of my conduct in baptizing her; on my own principles."

We have called the above an instructive incident. And it is not such; showing, as it does, side by side with Paul's story of the incestuous Corinthian, the mingled mercy and wisdom, even in their severity, of Christ's laws of discipline? J. D.

Our Approaching Association.

The Western Association of Baptist Churches opens its Session this year in the New Baptist Chapel, St. Andrews, on Thursday, the 15th inst., at 2 o'clock. P. M. Rev. E. Hickson, A. M., will preach the introductory sermon (n. v.) on Friday morning. The business of the Association will probably be disposed of by Saturday evening; but it is understood that the religious exercises do not terminate until Sabbath evening. The preaching and labors of the Lord's day, therefore, are an integral part of our Association services, and consequently under the guidance of the body. Let no minister imagine that he is at liberty to leave until the work of the Sabbath is over. We go to St. Andrews not simply to pass resolutions and make arrangements for future action; but, with the divine blessing, to save souls. This is the first Baptist Association ever held in the town of St. Andrews. God grant that it may be distinguished for brotherly communion, Christian fervor, and spiritual life and power! Our Bro. Crawley is struggling hard in the Master's name to establish the Baptist cause in St. Andrews, and hitherto he has not laboured in vain. He naturally looks with great interest to this contemplated gathering of the brotherhood to aid him in his great work. We shall regard such aid just in proportion as the business is conducted in the spirit of brotherly love, and the preaching, exhortations and prayers are stamped with the impress of the Spirit's power. Such being the fact, let each and all with one accord, pray in faith that an "unction from the Holy One," may descend upon ministers and people. Then may we hope that God, even our own God, will bless us.

The N. B. Baptist Home Missionary Board met at Leinster Street on the 5th inst. Present—Rev. L. E. Bill, W. Y. Garner, Geo. Sealy, and brethren Cosgrove, Sime, May, Sievers, and Masters.

Letters were read from Rev. D. Crandall, reporting three months' labour at the Salt Spring Settlement; he has baptized two heads of families, and is much encouraged in his work.

Read a letter from Rev. J. Tozer, reporting three months' labour. He writes that he still occupies six preaching stations, holds from four to six meetings weekly; has had one baptism, and expects others soon; the books sent by the Board created great interest in the Sabbath School. Report was received, and amount due, \$10, ordered to be paid.

Read one from Rev. Wm. M. Edwards, one year's report. He reports two converted and baptized; has preached four to five sermons per week during the winter; have one District Sabbath School, with an average attendance of forty-five, the prospects of which are very hopeful, and expect soon to be self-sustaining. Report was received, and amount due ordered to be paid.

Letters from Elijah G. Vincent and Rev. D. Blakey, asking aid for brother S. O. Moore, at Butteville and Dundas. It was referred to next meeting to be held at the Western Association.

And one from Rev. J. Spencer, asking aid towards the establishment of a City Missionary to preach to the Seamen in port, and the destitute of the city. It not being a matter the Board could deal with, it was referred to the City Churches.

The Corresponding Secretary presented an account for printing Circulars and postage, \$2.80—ordered to be paid.

Voted \$20 to Rev. J. McInnis, from Indian Missionary fund.

On motion, voted to commence the meetings of the Board at 7 o'clock, until Spring.

On motion, adjourned to meet at Brussels Street on the first Monday in October.

J. E. MARSHALL, Rec. Sec'y.

Correspondence from the Holy Land.

No. II.

JERUSALEM, April 1884.

I cannot close my remarks on Palestine without briefly describing some of the ancient pools and tombs around the Holy City, also a few other things that have come under my observation. The most remarkable of the former are the pools of the Virgin, Siloam, and the upper and lower Gihon. Passing down the valley of Jehoshaphat to the base of "Ophel," a high ridge jutting out from the south-eastern portion of the city, we come to the pool of the Virgin. Whether Scripture has any allusion to this pool or not is a matter of dispute. Certainly it does not refer to it under the above name. It is remarkable for two things, first, its waters experience a sudden rise and fall as often as once or more a day; second, it is connected with the pool of Siloam, on the western side of Ophel, by a tunnel through the solid rock nearly six hundred yards long. The rising and falling of its waters arises, it is thought, from the gas endeavoring to escape through the water, and thus causing the water to bubble up. There appears to be a constant supply of pure water in this pool, and when we visited it, women were employed there washing clothes. The pool of Siloam, on the western side of Ophel, by a tunnel through the solid rock nearly six hundred yards long. The rising and falling of its waters arises, it is thought, from the gas endeavoring to escape through the water, and thus causing the water to bubble up. There appears to be a constant supply of pure water in this pool, and when we visited it, women were employed there washing clothes. The pool of Siloam, on the western side of Ophel, by a tunnel through the solid rock nearly six hundred yards long. The rising and falling of its waters arises, it is thought, from the gas endeavoring to escape through the water, and thus causing the water to bubble up. 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