

THE LOVE OF GOD.

Like a cradle rocking, rocking, Silent, peaceful, to and fro— Like a mother's sweet looks falling On the little face below— Hangs the green earth, swinging, rocking, Jarless, noiseless, safe and slow, Falls the light of God's face bending Watching us below.

Visitor Pulpit.

THE ANNUAL LETTER

To the Churches of the F. E. Island Baptist Association, Prepared by Rev. A. H. Lavers and Adopted by the Body.

DEAR BRETHREN.—Having again been permitted to assemble ourselves in our associated capacity, to deliberate upon the varied and vital interests of our denominational life and work, and having enjoyed the privilege of reading the letters which have been forwarded by your respective churches, we now, in conformity with a time honored practice, send to you our annual epistle, rejoicing greatly in the close relationship existing between this Association, as a representative Baptist Body, and the churches of our faith throughout the Province, and praying always that the ties which now bind us may be continually strengthened, and we "go forward" in the work which the Great Head of the church has committed into our hands.

You, without doubt, are painfully conscious that a large proportion of our increasing membership counts for very little except upon the records of our churches. Much of the power in the church is a latent power, and it is in this view of the condition of our affairs that we now address you upon a subject which, you will agree, cannot be too well understood or too highly appreciated.

In asking your attention to the question of Church Discipline we will at once explain that it is not our intention to treat exclusively of those offences or disorders which from time to time disturb our harmony and hinder our usefulness. This of itself, were but a very imperfect or contracted view of our subject. The word discipline does not simply mean correction, chastisement, or punishment, but it means also training, education, culture, or as Webster defined, "The treatment suited to a Disciple or Learner," and it is in this sense of the term which best suits our present purpose, and to which we would chiefly ask your consideration. It has been well said that "a christian church is the family of Christ, in which subordination, regularity, instruction, watchful care, reproof and love, are daily blended in family discipline. It is the school of Christ every member of which is in a process of education, and is bound to make the utmost improvement in knowledge and holiness. A church is an army, every soldier a volunteer, but what would become of an army if its whole discipline consisted in trying delinquents, and driving the unworthy out of the ranks." And in too many instances this which is so justly censured in our quotation seems to be the whole nature and design of church discipline, and it is in this sense the term is most frequently employed. But believing, brethren, that it is your wish to "grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord your God," (2 Pet. 3: 18), and that it is also your earnest desire that your newly received members may become healthful, vigorous and useful christians, we would affectionately and earnestly urge upon you the necessity of exercising such wholesome discipline as will tend to that development of christian character, that "perfection" or "full growth" which is so frequently spoken of in the scriptures, and which constitutes a sure test of christian discipleship.

In the first place, we would direct your attention to the importance of having our churches well disciplined in the weighty matters connected

with the reception of new members. It is to the lasting honor of the Religious Body, of which we form a small part, that it has always earnestly contented for a regenerated church membership. We may now be holding this ground in common with other christian communions, but every student of church history, is aware that this has not always been the case, and that our fathers have borne, often at the sacrifice of property, liberty and life, the strongest testimony against every principle or practice which conflicted with this essential New Testament doctrine. "A Spiritual Church," "a holy nation," "a peculiar people," these have been our watch-words for centuries. And that our churches may be "Spiritual" in more than name, that we may have the "power of godliness," and not the form merely, it is essentially necessary that great caution should be used so that none but such as are truly regenerate should be found within our ranks. The fact that the "character of the members determines the character of the church," should of itself be sufficient to cause us to guard against mistaken zeal in bringing persons into the church before there is satisfactory evidence of personal piety. A "living," active church can never be "built up" out of dead material, and to prevent the great evils which are certain to follow any laxity in this respect, we owe it to the world, to ourselves, and to those who are immediately concerned that our churches should be well instructed in this duty.

SECONDLY, We would remind you, brethren, that to maintain a proper state of discipline it is also highly important that our covenant engagements should be thoroughly understood and duly enforced. In uniting with the church we make a solemn engagement, expressed or implied with our fellow members, and of our own will, assume certain duties. We have our one book of instruction which plainly and distinctly points out and enforces these duties, "Taught by the Spirit" as we are it manifests culpable neglect if we fail to have a lively apprehension of the relationship existing between ourselves and others, and the obligations arising out of this relationship. To assist our memories and for convenience we have "Church Covenants" appended to the "articles of our faith," and to this there can be no valid objection. The adoption of this covenant imposes no other obligations upon us than such as are found in the Holy Scriptures. It is simply expressive of our intention to perform those duties which are enjoined upon us by Him whose obedient servants we profess to have become. The objections to "confessions of faith" and "covenants" which are sometimes made are occasioned either by misunderstandings, or else we have reason to fear, by the "wilfulness and pride of men who do not wish to be bound to anything definite but rather desire unrestricted license in opinion, speech and conduct." David had a written creed for the guide of his life (Ps. 101), and the practical value of the form of covenant in general use in our churches is quite obvious to any who will compare its precepts with the precepts contained in God's Word. We would, therefore, strongly recommend, as a means to secure a proper state of discipline, that a copy of the "Covenant" be placed in the hands of every member, that it be frequently read, and explained, if explanation be necessary, to the church, and that the duty of keeping their covenant engagements inviolate be repeatedly and solemnly urged upon our members, "now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient to all (1 Thess. 5: 14).

THIRDLY, Our discipline should be of such a nature as would lead all our members to seriously consider the great end of their existence. The true aim of christian life is to glorify God. Every disciple is to "keep a single eye to his glory," and we are not left in the dark as to the methods to be employed for the accomplishment of this noble purpose. "Herein" said our great Teacher, "is

my Father glorified that ye bare much fruit." Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God, it follows then that the church of Christ is no place for idleness or play, but for whole-hearted work. When we enter the church we are not to sit down contented and happy having "confessed Christ" and followed him in certain of his ordinances. This is an important, an essential step, but after all it is only the first step in the journey heavenward. It now becomes the duty of the professing christian to live and labor, that God may be honored and loved, and his religion revered, by his intelligent creatures. The disciple is to "do good to all men," he is to be "rich in good works," for "faith without works is dead." Thus it is written, but what a small percentage of our church membership is actually engaged in true, genuine, gospel effort. When the roll is called for real, self-sacrificing service how few respond "here am I." The small attendance at the prayer, conference, and other devotional meetings, in so many of our churches, the fewness of those who care to take part in such meetings, or in fact in any kind of personal effort for the good of souls and the spread of the Saviour's kingdom. The little interest taken by many in the business of the church or the interests of the denomination. The smallness of their contributions to religious and benevolent objects are all lamentable illustrations of the fact we have stated, and Zion languishes, social religious meetings become cold, formal, lifeless and perhaps cease altogether. Sabbath schools, the great work-shops of the church, are not sustained as they ought to be. The church loses vitality, and exerts no real power for good. Souls are not saved, wanderers continue to wander unreclaimed, confusion and strife reign supreme, our holy religion becomes a bye word and reproach and the very name of God is dishonored, all because professing christians do not live and labor as Christ has commanded. In view of the sad consequences of this shameful neglect, let us not fail to impress upon those who have just girded on the armor, that they are in the world for the same purpose as Christ was in the world. "He came to seek and to save the lost," we are to be employed in the same service. "As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world," and as He honored the Father on earth by a life of holy obedience, so are we to do according to our ability, and that this high standard of christian activity may be reached, our churches must be trained so that our converts from the beginning may be engaged in the work of real discipleship. No time should be lost. New habits of thinking and acting are being formed, and the religious habits of converted men and women soon become fixed, and if they are not at once engaged in christian efforts the chances are they will never be brought into active service. Such "order" then should be made in all our churches as would enlist the young converts into this work immediately, and lead him to enquire, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," and it seems to us that if there were less indifference, less wilful disobedience to the commands of the Master, by those who have been longer in his ranks and claim to be under his authority. The young disciple would be made to feel that when he enrolled himself in Christ's army he entered for actual service, and whatever power he possessed for doing good was to be freely and fully exercised. Better order, more perfect discipline is needed, brethren, to check the great waste of power which we apprehend is a growing evil amongst us.

We have so far attempted to treat this question chiefly in a general way. We can only briefly refer to the character of the discipline which should be exercised in certain particular cases. In this connection we would entreat of you to see to it that the churches are well instructed in the observance of the christian Sabbath, we would not charge our brethren with general laxity in this respect, yet all will acknowledge that God's day is not "kept holy" as he has commanded. Sunday pleasure seeking is a growing evil in our own, as well as in other

lands, and it is the duty of the church to make a firm stand against it. Church members, especially the young, by precept and example should be taught that the sacred hours of this day are to be consecrated to the service and worship of Jehovah. Sabbath pleasuring, as well as Sabbath visiting, is Sabbath desecration, and should never be indulged in. In a word, if the Sabbath is not to be converted from a day of sacred rest, of divine worship and holy instruction, into a day of pleasure and amusement, our churches must educate and train their members that the privileges and duties of the day which God has sanctified may be duly appreciated and faithfully performed.

The duties which church members owe to each other have been already alluded to, and the duties which churches individually and collectively owe to their ministers should be matters of correct discipline. For example, it should never be forgotten that the relation a worthy pastor holds to his own people is more sacred than that of any other minister, yet how often do we prove faithless to his relation. And what attempts are sometimes made to sander these sacred ties. * * * All the duties which churches owe to their pastors, and through their pastor to the world, to themselves and to God himself, are far too numerous to be mentioned even in this letter—but they are written elsewhere—suffice it for us to simply remind you that it is the duty of church members to attend themselves upon the ministrations of their own spiritual teachers and, if possible, induce others to attend. Absence from a single service is a disappointment to all who are really interested, a bad example for others to follow, and a direct violation of God's command. Churches should learn to respect their pastors; co-operate with them in every good work, yield a cheerful obedience to their Scriptural authority, pray for them, and, further, their rights and privileges should be properly understood and respected by all if we would save ourselves from the troubles which are certain to arise when these privileges are not respected or when these rights are invaded. The right of a pastor, for instance, to preside at church meetings without a vote of the church, to the control of his own pulpit and to the general oversight of all that appertains to his office or the spiritual condition of his own people, ought to be acknowledged, and his rightful, scriptural authority in all such matters should never be lost sight of. The honest discharge of every pecuniary obligations, by every church member and by the church as a whole, we trust it is needless to add, should form a characteristic element in church discipline. The duty of carefully and prayerfully reading the Word of God, and meditating upon the truths it reveals. The maintaining of family and private devotion, of contributing as God gives ability to the support of the gospel and the current expenses of the church, of attending religious services and "confess with the mouth" the Lord Jesus (Rom. 10: 9), and other duties which belong to the religion of Jesus Christ are great matters in which every member of the church should be thoroughly instructed, and surely, the professing christian who refuses to be a learner in the "School of Christ" cannot claim to be a loving, obedient or consistent disciple of that great Teacher "who taught as man never taught."

It only remains for us to add a few words as to the course to be followed in the case of offenses and disagreements. The "Law" which Christ has delivered is the only law we are to follow in all such cases. "If thy brother offend thee go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone," this is the "first step" to be taken in affairs of this nature, the object in "going" is plainly indicated, not to abuse, criminate, threaten, or simply to "clear the law" and prepare the way for future proceedings, but to "gain thy brother" and if this noble object is gained the matter ends between "thee and him alone," should this not be accomplished then comes the next step, "Take with thee one or two more" as witnesses, and to bring

about a reconciliation if possible, between "brethren" and stop win the erring back to duty. If all this does not succeed, then the third and final step is to be taken. "Tell it" not to those who are without, but "to the church," if the case is serious and requires church action, and as the church is to administer the laws of Christ it should not allow the matter to come before it as a Body until it is well satisfied that the preceding steps have all been taken. Lovingly, in the true spirit of christianity, but firmly the "law" which Christ has given must be enforced in every instance. It has been suggested that one or two pastors of other churches, or lay members, may be asked to give advice and in certain cases, to prevent discord in the church, this course may be pursued. These may be the "one or two" and is no violation of the rules above cited. A member must not because "he has a grievance," fail to discharge his religious obligations and absent himself from the sanctuary, from the Lord's table, he thus makes himself a transgressor, and for a church to neglect the administration of the ordinances because some of its members disagree is a course which ought not to be pursued. "Do this in remembrance of Me," is a command which no church or individual should "set at naught" or refuse to comply with. Such, brethren, is the "Divine Law." These are the proper steps to be taken. Prayer and patience are needed and we must seek to have the mind of Christ, "who while we were yet enemies died for us." Space and time forbid that we should speak at all concerning those offences which are denominated public offences. Such as making division and disturbance in the church." Denial of the essential truths of christianity, immorality, covetousness, or neglect to provide for one's own family, or refusal to bear a proportional part of the expenses of the church, a useless disorderly life, neglect of the meetings or ordinances of the church, refusal to be reconciled to a brother, or to "hear the church" "bearing false witness" suffice it to say that these are all matters of discipline, and every church should be instructed in "Church order and discipline" so that the sad effects of ignorance may not be seen and felt among us. It was Andrew Fuller who said that "the time of peace was the best time to learn discipline against the time of confusion; that true religion may be vindicated and the erring saved." We have written nothing new to you, dear brethren, we have simply pointed you to the "old landmarks," God's way is always the best way, give then, your close adherence to the rules, principles, and doctrines of divine revelation, so that you may secure the efficiency of each of your members and of the entire body of the church, then shall purity, knowledge, and harmony prevail and men will learn to respect and love us, as the obedient disciples of the Lord Jesus who loved his church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.

There are many ways which lead from God, but only one way back. However far and long the wanderer may have gone the way back to the Father's forgiveness and love is very straight and plain and short—repentance. KAROKA, Mo., Feb. 9, 1880. I purchased five bottles of your Hop Bitters of Bishop & Co., last fall, for my daughter, and am well pleased with the Bitters. They did her more good than all the medicine she has taken for six years. WM. T. MCCLURE. The above is from a very reliable farmer, whose daughter was in poor health for seven or eight years, and could obtain no relief until she used Hop Bitters. She is now in as good health as any person in the country. We have a large sale, and they are making remarkable cures. W. H. BISHOP & CO. Do you wish a beautiful complexion? Then use Ayer's Sarsaparilla. It cleanses and purifies the blood, and thereby removes blotches and pimples from the skin, making it smooth and clear, and giving it a bright and healthy appearance.

MINISTERS' ATTENTION Weekly Offering envelopes, unmarked per 1,000, do. per 500, do. per 100, do. per 50, do. per 25, do. per 10, do. per 5, do. per 2, do. per 1, do. per 1/2, do. per 1/4, do. per 1/8, do. per 1/16, do. per 1/32, do. per 1/64, do. per 1/128, do. per 1/256, do. per 1/512, do. per 1/1024, do. per 1/2048, do. per 1/4096, do. per 1/8192, do. per 1/16384, do. per 1/32768, do. per 1/65536, do. per 1/131072, do. per 1/262144, do. per 1/524288, do. per 1/1048576, do. per 1/2097152, do. per 1/4194304, do. per 1/8388608, do. per 1/16777216, do. per 1/33554432, do. per 1/67108864, do. per 1/134217728, do. per 1/268435456, do. per 1/536870912, do. per 1/1073741824, do. per 1/2147483648, do. per 1/4294967296, do. per 1/8589934592, do. per 1/17179869184, do. per 1/34359738368, do. per 1/68719476736, do. per 1/137438953472, do. per 1/274877906944, do. per 1/549755813888, do. per 1/1099511627776, do. per 1/2199023255552, do. per 1/4398046511104, do. per 1/8796093022208, do. per 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