

Newcastle upon Tyne

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AN

ACCOUNT

OF THE

CHRISTIAN PRACTICES

OBSERVED BY

The Churches

CALLED

GLASITES IN SCOTLAND,

England &
AND SANDEMANIANS IN AMERICA.

In a Letter to a Friend.

ACTS xxviii. 22. We desire to hear of thee what thou think-
est: for, as concerning this Sect, we know that every
where it is spoken against.



GALASHIELS:

REPRINTED BY D. FAIR.

1832.

AN
ACCOUNT, &c.

SIR,

AS you have signified your desire that I should give you a distinct account of the practical tenets of the RELIGIOUS SOCIETY to which I belong, I may presume you have sufficient knowledge of the doctrine they contend for. But if you are unacquainted with their principles, they would direct you to the whole Word of God, taken in its most obvious and consistent meaning; for they have no formal creed or confession of faith to refer you to. However, you may see what they have to say from the Scriptures, for the doctrines in which they differ from other religious societies, in the works of Mr. JOHN GLAS, and the Letters on Theron and Aspasio.

My present task is only to give you an account of their practices relating to gospel-fellowship, worship, discipline, and other duties; and that chiefly in those particulars wherein they differ from others. In doing this, you may assure yourself that I will omit no one of their practices, public or private; but you shall know all that I know, so far as words can inform you. This I shall do the more explicitly, as I find you have heard many strange and evil reports about us.

That you may know distinctly the general principles we go upon in our religious practices, you may keep in mind the following premises.

1. We think ourselves obliged to regard all the words of Christ and his apostles, in their plain, obvious, and original meaning; looking upon every precept in the New Testament (except such as may relate to what is properly miraculous,) to be binding upon us now, as much as upon the first churches.

2. We think ourselves bound to follow the practices of the primitive disciples and churches, as far as we can learn from the New Testament how they walked, while the apostles were with them, beholding their order and stedfastness in the faith.

3. We think ourselves also bound carefully to avoid all the things for which they were reprov'd, by our Lord or his apostles.

These premises are founded upon the general faith of the gospel ; that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*, and, as such, the only *Prophet, Priest, and King* of God's church, so that all the divine knowledge we can possibly acquire, is contained in his revealed Word, as he is the *Prophet* ; all our hope of salvation is derived from the complete atonement he has made, and the perfect righteousness he has wrought out for sinners, as he is the *Priest* ; and we are therefore bound to do whatsoever he hath commanded us, as he is the *King* and Head of the church.

On these principles several churches have been formed, first in SCOTLAND, after that in ENGLAND, and more lately in AMERICA ; who are all professedly of one heart and soul, both in the faith and in the obedience of the gospel. To the church in London* I have belonged for some time, and am now able to give you the following account of our Worship and Order.

We constantly meet together on the first day of the week, and keep it as the *Christian Sabbath*, in commemoration of Christ's resurrection ; not only for prayer and praise, and to hear the Word of God read, but *particularly* to break bread, or to communicate together in the Lord's Supper, and in the *Contribution* ; finding that the churches which were under the

* In 1767, when the above was written, the church assembling in Paul's Alley consisted of upwards of one hundred souls.

immediate eye and care of the apostles, did so every Sabbath ; so that there is the same example and authority for the breaking of bread and contributing, as for meeting together on that day.* We therefore think it unscriptural and superstitious, to make such a difference between the one and the other, as to celebrate the Lord's Supper yearly, quarterly, or monthly ; while the Christian Sabbath is kept weekly. We look upon the Christian Sabbath as designed for the celebration of divine ordinances, which are summarily comprised, Acts ii. 42. in continuing stedfastly in the apostles' *doctrine* and *fellowship*, and in *breaking of bread*, and in *prayers*.—*Praising God*, ver. 47.

It being the unquestionable direction of the apostles to the churches, to continue instant in PRAYER, Rom. xii. 12. &c. not only the elders or pastors of the church are engaged herein, but likewise the brethren are called upon by name, three or four, and sometimes more, one after another, to engage in it. This is done in the church in the morning of the Lord's day. And as we are exhorted to pray for kings, and for all in authority, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. we therefore take opportunity every Sabbath, to supplicate blessings upon our sovereign the king, &c.

At the conclusion of every prayer, whether by the elders or the brethren, the whole church say Amen,

* Acts xx. 7. Upon the *first day* of the week, when the disciples came together to *break bread*, Paul preached unto them. ii. 42. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles'—*fellowship*, and in *breaking of bread*. vi. 1.—*daily ministration*.

with an audible voice, according to what is intimated, 1 Cor. xiv. 16.* The Lord's Prayer is used by us at the beginning and at the close of public worship.

To prayer is annexed the ordinance of SINGING; which is, generally, between the prayers. And we make use of the Psalms of David, in a metrical translation, that is nearest to the original.

We have, both in the morning and afternoon, not only the preaching and expounding, but *especially* the READING of the Word: no less than four or five chapters being read in the morning, and as many in the afternoon; so conducted, that, in a course of time, no part of the sacred Word is omitted.

In the interval between the morning and afternoon service, we have our LOVE FEASTS; of which every member partakes, by dining in a room provided for that purpose in the Meeting-house. The design of these feasts is to cultivate mutual knowledge and friendship, to testify that we are all brethren of the same family; that the poor and the rich may partake together, as upon a level in the fellowship; and that the poor may have a comfortable meal at the expense of the more wealthy. Our warrant for this is the same that we have for keeping the first day Sabbath; namely, the practice of the apostolic churches, intimated to us in 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21. 2 Pet. ii. 13.

* 1 Cor. xiv. 16. Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say *Amen*, at thy giving of thanks? &c.

Jude 12.* And herein we follow the example of our Lord, who did frequently eat and drink with his disciples. The evangelists have been particular in noticing this after his resurrection, Luke xxix. 30, 35, 42, 43. Mark xvi. 14. Acts x. 41.

We cannot allow any member to be absent from the feast, either through indifference, or mere inconvenience; for we consider all the church as one family; and are sensible that this christian practice is as clearly signified to us as is that of keeping the first day Sabbath. We do not indeed pretend to have any express direction or rule for the precise day, or time of the day, in which these feasts should be observed, any more than we have for the precise hour of beginning and ending divine worship in the morning and afternoon of the Lord's day: yet we have chosen the time above specified as the most proper, when the whole church are together; no other day, or time of the day, being found, wherein the feast can be conducted with equal conveniency.

This and other opportunities we take for the *kiss of Charity*, or the saluting each other with an holy kiss; a practice most expressly exhorted to no less than five times in the New Testament, Rom. xvi. 16. 1 Cor xvi. 20. 2 Cor. xiii. 12. 1 Thess v. 26. 1 Pet.

* 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21. This is not to eat the *Lord's Supper*; for in eating, every one taketh before other his *own supper*. 2 Pet. ii. 13. Sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while *they feast with you*. Jude 12. These are spots in your *feasts of charity*, when *they feast with you*.

v. 14. We are very certain that this exhortation was meant, understood, and practised *literally*; we therefore account all objections against it, and all attempts to set it aside, by substituting any other form of salutation in its room, to proceed from a disregard to the authority of New Testament precepts, and to be the laying aside one divinely appointed mean for promoting that mutual love which is essential to true Christianity.

We observe this practice, not only at the love feast, (when each member salutes the person that sits next him on each side,) but at the admission of a member, and at other times occasionally, when it seems natural to give a token of love to each other.

Immediately preceding the Lord's Supper, we have the CONTRIBUTION for the support of the poor, the expense of the Lord's Supper, and other sacred purposes; as honour to the elders and ministering widows, or deaconesses, (whose condition in life will not, without some relief, admit their being so much taken off from their respective employments, as the labour of their office may require, &c.) In this ordinance, we think we are called to attend to the direction, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.* and to the connection between the fellowship and breaking of bread, Acts

* 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Now concerning the *Collection* for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, so do ye: upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, &c.

ii. 42. Annual, or other periodical subscriptions, as practised by religious societies, we regard as mere modern contrivances.

When this collection, accompanied with prayer, is made, one of the elders proceeds to administer the LORD'S SUPPER, which is done in the most simple form, according to the Scripture ; and concluded with a scriptural song, taken out of Rev. i. 5, 6. and v. 9, 10.

In the administration of this great ordinance, we decline the popular manner of addressing the communicants while partaking, which seems only to answer the purpose of drawing attention from the grand thing signified, to the preacher ; and for which there is not any foundation in all the New Testament.

This being finished, we proceed at last to another Christian duty expressly required of the churches, viz. EXHORTATION, Heb. iii. 18. 1 Thes. iv. 18. Heb. x. 24, 25.* called prophesying, probably meaning the explaining of the old Testament prophecies. See and read 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 24, 33. Accordingly, after prayer, the brethren are called upon to exhort one another ; or if any of the brethren have to propose a question for edification, on some portion of scripture, he is at liberty to state it.

* Heb. iii. 13. *Exhort one another daily.* 1 Thes. iv. 18. Wherefore comfort, or *exhort* one another with these words. Heb. x. 24, 25. Let us consider one another, to *provoke unto love and good works*, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but *exhorting* one another.

But this being the time usually appropriated to hear such as would speak to the church for admission, the exhortation is sometimes omitted ; but then the same is attended to at our church meetings, on Tuesday and Friday evenings, at Six o'Clock ; as we are desirous to take frequent opportunities for putting each other in mind of the manifold grace of God, and to provoke one another unto love and good works.

We practise the BAPTISM of children, because of such (as our Lord avers) is the kingdom of heaven ; and therefore they are of the body to which the one baptism belongs—because the ground of *his* faith, who in adult age believes and is baptised, is the gospel declaration of salvation to him that believes, and to his children ; and so is as good a reason for their baptism, as for his own. For the current address of the gospel is, “ believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,” Acts xvi. 13. And the current practice consequent upon it was, that whole households were baptised, the person that believed and *all his* straightway. And because we are assured, that if but one of the parents believe, the children are not unclean, but holy, 1 Cor. vii. 14. Yea, we cannot but apprehend that the denial of it, and the objections against it, intimate a disbelief and denial of the sovereignty and freedom of divine grace ; as if there must be something in an adult person to be a ground of hope towards God, which cannot be in an infant.

The power of divine grace and authority has of late appeared very remarkable, in bringing such numbers to give up their objections, and to own before the church, that their opposition to it proceeded from the worst of principles ; even the denial of, and an opposition to, that grace which alone can save, and give hope to the guilty and helpless.

We all agree in the unlawfulness of *eating blood*, and things strangled ; or as in Gen. ix. 4. *flesh with its blood*. For this is solemnly forbidden to the Gentile believers, Acts xv. 20, 28, 29. and xxi. 25.* and their abstaining from these things, is there insisted on as a necessary term of their communion. We likewise find this very edict referred to, and declared to be binding upon the disciples of Christ, to his second coming, Rev. ii. 24, 25.†

Since our Lord tells his disciples that they ought to *wash one another's feet*, according to the example he gave them, John xiii. 14, 15.‡ we think this also incumbent upon us, whenever it can be an act of kindness to a brother so to do.

* Acts xv. 28, 29. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no other burden, than these necessary things ; that ye abstain from, &c.

† Rev. ii. 24, 25. I will put upon you none other burden, but that which ye have already ; hold fast till I come.

‡ John xiii. 14, 15. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet : for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you.

We reckon it unlawful to lay up treasures on earth, by setting them apart for any distant, future, uncertain use ; but think it incumbent on us to lay up treasure in heaven, by *giving alms*, Matt. vi. 19, 20. compared with Luke xii. 23. readily doing good to all men, especially to the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10. Every one, therefore, is to look upon all that he possesses as open to the calls of divine providence, and to contribute according to his ability, as every one has need. A reluctance to this, we esteem one plain effect and evidence of *covetousness*. And all the several churches in connection with us have one cause at heart, aiming to maintain a cordial friendship and open fellowship with each other as much as possible for their mutual assistance and support, as occasion may require. See 2 Cor. viii, ix.

We think every Christian must be a loyal subject, submitting himself in civil concerns to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ; punctually regarding the rules laid down, Rom. xiii. 1—7. 1 Pet. ii. 13—17. This was required of the disciples and churches, when they were under a tyrannical and persecuting government ; and it cannot be less a duty under the present mild and peaceable one.

Though we do not find any *express* precept or precedent in Scripture for FAMILY PRAYER ; yet the general commands, to *pray without ceasing, in every thing to give thanks, &c.* seem to make family prayer a duty, on account of the family mercies wanted or enjoyed : neither can we shew our fear of God, our

dependence upon him, and our thankfulness to him, as we are required to do, if there be no worship of God in our families: and there is a special reason for maintaining it, where there are children to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But while we observe this obligation, (which is but deduced from general precepts) strenuously insisted on by many, who can in other instances evade some of the plainest and clearest precepts and precedents in the word of God; it gives us reason to suspect, that they are influenced to their religious practices, not by the fear of God, the authority of Christ, or the spirit of truth; but by the fashion of the times, the rules of decency and conveniency, a regard for their worldly reputation, or by some self righteous or superstitious motives. The same judgment we are obliged to form of those who make conscience of keeping the first day Sabbath; but can neglect, and even object to the weekly communion, and the brotherly exhortations; can even ridicule the feasts of charity; and the holy kiss; and argue against abstinence from blood: things as expressly mentioned in the Word, and even more frequently intimated and enjoined, than what they contend for.

We judge it absolutely necessary to avoid the spirit and practice of the ancient Pharisees, in making more sins and duties than the Scripture has made, and in making void the divine precepts, by human traditions, or logical evasions. We think it belongs to Antichrist to make laws where Christ has made none; or dispense with any he has given us.

Therefore, as we cannot find where **DIVERSION**, public or private, is forbidden; we account any amusement lawful that is not connected with circumstances really sinful. Yet as we esteem a **LOT** to be a sacred thing, Prov. xvi. 33.* we judge the using it in diversion to be unlawful, and are therefore against playing at cards or dice, &c. even as we should be against taking the name of the Lord in vain.

We have a **PLURALITY** of **ELDERS**, pastors or bishops, in each of our churches; as it is certain the primitive churches had: Acts xx. 17. Phil. i. 1, &c.† The apostles were particularly concerned that every church should be thus furnished, Acts xiv. 23.‡ and Titus was ordered by Paul to ordain elders in every city, Tit. i. 5. We therefore think it necessary there should be two elders, at least, present in every act of discipline,§ and at the administration of the Lord's Supper.

* Prov. xvi. 33. The *lot* is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.

† Acts xx. 17. He sent to Ephesus, and called the Elders of the church. Phil. i. 1. To all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.

‡ Acts xiv. 23. And when they had ordained them elders in every church.

§ It is not hereby intended to intimate that a company of Christ's disciples, who have not elders to go before them, may not rebuke an offending brother, and if he repent not dissolve their connection with him; provided they are so distant from other churches of the saints, that a presbytery cannot readily be obtained.

In order to know who should be *chosen* and *ordained* to the ELDER's office, we look attentively into 1 Tim. iii. 1—7. Titus i. 6—9. where their qualifications are professedly laid down. We esteem it our duty to choose such to the office, who appear to answer the scriptural qualifications; not objecting to any for want of human learning, or any such acquirements, as are commonly thought necessary, that they might make a decent, reputable appearance in the world; such things not being at all mentioned by the apostle amongst the necessary qualifications. Neither do we think it any hindrance to their election, that they be such as are engaged in trade and merchandise, or any lawful employment in life; knowing that there were such among the primitive elders, who obtained their subsistence by their own labour, as is plainly hinted, Acts xx. 34, 35.* At the same time we would reject from the office all such who had not these scriptural qualifications, however learned, valuable or reputable they may otherwise be. We aim to keep exact and close to the scripture, neither insisting upon any more qualifications, nor being satisfied with any other or fewer, than what we find expressly pointed out to us in the Word of God.

As to that phrase, *the husband of one wife*; in the Greek, *a man of one woman*, 1 Tim. iii. 2, 12. Titus

* *These hands have ministered to my necessities, &c.* I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye (elders or bishops,) ought to support the weak, &c.

i. 6. we do not conceive that it stands absolutely opposed to a person in single life ; because we find some of the officers in the primitive church, even apostles and evangelists, were unmarried persons: neither can we think it stands opposed to the having two wives at a time, as this would be inconsistent with his being so much as a member ; and therefore must be opposed to his having married a second wife. This interpretation is suggested and confirmed by the similar phrase, of the widow's having been the wife of one man, 1 Tim. v. 9. If one that is an elder, being a widower, should choose to marry a second wife, he is not restrained from it ; only in that case, he is to lay down his office, and become a private member.

When any one (or more) of the brethren is found to answer the descriptions of a bishop or elder, he is chosen and called by the church to the office, and ordained by prayer and fasting, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery or eldership ; who likewise on this occasion give him the right hand of fellowship, Gal. ii. 9. And instead of giving him any charge of merely human composition, the charge which we find in 1 Tim. vi. 10—16. or some other suitable part of that epistle, is read distinctly to him by one of the elders ; in which the whole church signify their concurrence, by saying, Amen.

The choice and ordination of a DEACON* (whose

* To the deacon add the deaconess, or ministering widow, whose character is given by the apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 11. v. 9, 10.

qualifications are described, 1 Tim. iii. 8—13.) is done in much the same way, only without fasting and the right hand of fellowship.

We are willing to receive into our communion even the poorest and vilest of mankind, who by their profession appear to understand and believe the TRUTH ; who profess repentance from dead works, whether pharisaical or profane ; and discover a readiness to do whatever Christ has commanded. This profession is made before the whole church ; when the elders first, and afterwards the other members, ask such questions as they find necessary, until the whole church are satisfied.

On these occasions, opportunity is frequently taken to inquire and exhort concerning a conscientious regard to closet prayer, family religion, and relative duties.

When the church are all agreed to receive any into their fellowship, prayer is offered up, attended with the imposition of hands upon the person received, as a scriptural token of blessing, in the name of the Lord.

Afterwards the elders and members salute him with the holy kiss, to testify personally and singly, that they heartily welcome him into the fellowship, and love him for the sake of the truth he has confessed.

In matters of OFFENCE, or in any cases wherein the Scriptures require admonition and censure, we aim to follow, with the utmost exactness, the rules


that are given us in Matt. xviii. 15, 17. 1 Cor. v. 6, 13. 2 Thes. iii. 11, 15. and in other places.

We judge it our duty to admonish and censure a brother or sister for any breach of brotherly love, and for any act of profaneness or immorality.

We dare not continue in our fellowship any railers, drunkards, extortioners, unjust, fornicators, or unclean persons ; any Sabbath breakers, profane swearers, or perjurers ; any children disobedient to their parents ; servants disobedient to their masters ; subjects disaffected to their king or government ; any smugglers, or such as refuse to give to all their dues ; any covetous persons, or such as are discontented with their lot in providence, &c. In a word, we are for cutting off, or turning away from, all such as are of any of the characters mentioned, 1 Cor. v. 11. 2 Tim. iii. 2, 7. and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, 1 Tim. i. 9, 10.

When any particular act, discovering such characters, is found to be committed by a member, he is to be rebuked and censured for it, and treated as we are directed, Matt. xviii. 15, 16.* If, after these previous steps are taken, the person justifies his practice, or persists in it, he must be brought before the church ; and if he will not hear the church, he must be cut off. If it appear that the person be only over-

* Matt. xviii. 15, 16. If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone ; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, &c.

taken in a fault, we are to restore him in the spirit of meekness, on his appearing to repent, Gal. vi. 1. But if what he is justly charged with be a scandalous crime, or found to be his habitual practice; an immediate excommunication is required, according to 1 Cor. v. 5, 13. 

When a person is excommunicated, it is done in the presence and with the assent of the whole church; his crime or crimes are specified; are attested with clear, satisfactory evidence; and are proved by the divine Word to be contrary to the will of God, and the gospel of Christ. And when the church is agreed that this solemn act should pass; suitable supplication is offered up, one of the elders praying, as the mouth of the church, that the ordinance may be blessed to him for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. v. 5. A person thus excommunicated is to be treated by us, not merely as we would one who never made the Christian profession; for we are not allowed to cultivate friendship with him, but refrain from his company as the Jews did from a heathen man and a publican, Matt. xvii. 17. For there is a familiarity allowed us towards fornicators, &c. of this world, which we are forbidden to use towards persons of the same characters, who have made the Christian profession: for with such we are commanded not to eat; that is, in any such manner as would intimate a familiar friendship, 1 Cor. v. 9, 11. We are obliged to look upon such an one in the light of an apostate from the

faith, or from the obedience of it ; and his condition to be more dangerous and deplorable than that of one who never professed the faith, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 22.*

We find it indeed lawful to receive such an one a second time ; but not without the fullest evidence of repentance that can be given, even to that of his being in danger of being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. But if this person should incur the censure of the church after this second reception, and be cast out, we dare not receive him again, unless some mistakes should appear to have been previously committed by the church respecting him ; partly because we have no scriptural instance of a third reception of the same person ; and partly because it is impossible we should obtain a fuller evidence of repentance than that which he had given before, and which has in fact been proved to be hypocritical. Such is the solemn check which the appointed church-discipline puts upon all disobedience to the will and gospel of Christ.

But after all, we have no scripture warrant to inflict upon an excommunicated person any penalty. We detest the thought of attempting to deprive him of any of his civil liberties and privileges : on the contrary, we are as careful as we can be, that he should sustain no injury in his worldly reputation or

* 2 Pet. ii. 20, 22. If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome ; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning, &c.

interest by it ; that so *nothing* but the authority of Christ, in his word, may strike his conscience to bring him to repentance.

Thus far we have learned from Scripture, the course of our duty relating to ordinary cases ; but we are far from thinking ourselves either infallible or perfect in the knowledge of the Scripture. As we proceed in our Christian fellowship, circumstances may doubtless occur, which may be a means of correcting mistakes, or obtaining further knowledge : but so far as we have attained, it is certainly our duty to walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing, without being intimidated or slackened therein by the frowns and smiles of those around. Many cases may occasionally occur, which will demand the conscientious attention of the church, and a joint diligent search to know what the will of the Lord is. But we are not for perplexing ourselves with supposed cases ; such as never have happened, and never may : thinking ourselves under no necessity to come to any explicit agreement upon any merely supposed case, until it actually arises in the church, and we are called to consider it.

In every church transaction, whether it be receiving, censuring, or expelling members, choosing officers, or the like ; we esteem unanimity to be absolutely necessary. Nothing is decided by the vote of a majority, but by most explicit agreement of every member present. For this purpose, whenever any thing is to be determined, the name of every member

is called over in order, and each one distinctly has opportunity and liberty to inquire or object as his own judgment and conscience may dictate; and nothing is ordinarily effected, till the whole church present have expressed their agreement to, and satisfaction with, what is proposed. In some cases indeed there are dissenting voices. The reasons of the dissent are thereupon proposed and considered. If they are scriptural, the whole church has cause to change their opinion: if not, and the person persists in his opposition to the Word of God, the church is bound to reject him.

Such an unanimity as this we think not only possible and practicable; but actually required in a church, and necessary to their cordial, conscientious, and comfortable fellowship. It is *promised*, Jer. xxxii. 39.* It was *prayed for* by him whom the father heareth always, John xvii. 21—23.† It is *exemplified*, Acts iv. 23.‡ It is *illustrated* by the similitude of a natural body, and its various members, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 27. It is *exhorted to*, and required, 1 Cor.

* Jer. xxxii. 39. I will give them *one heart* and *one way*, that they may fear me, &c.

† John xvii. 21—23. That they *all may be one*: That they may *be one* as we are one: I in them, and thou in me: That they may be *made perfect in one*, &c.

‡ Acts iv. 23. And the multitude of them that believed, were of *one heart* and of *one soul*.

i. 10. Phil. ii. 2.* And the *ground of it* is clearly explained, Eph. iv. 4—6.† And wherever it does really exist, we count it an effect of the same supernatural power, which brings persons to be united in the faith.

We dare not esteem any of the precepts of the gospel trivial or punctilious ; nor admit of such a distinction between great and little, moral and positive, substantial and circumstantial, more or less weighty ; as shall give way to the omitting any thing that is required, or the committing any thing that is forbidden : knowing that man fell at first and ruined all his posterity, by the breach, not of what is called a moral, but of a positive precept : even such an one as our reason would be apt to judge punctilious, trivial, and circumstantial. We remember likewise what our Lord says ; he that breaketh one of these *least commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. In a word, we conceive every divine precept to be sacred and indispensable.

However, what we account the grand central duty of Christians, and the great evidence of true Chris-

* 1 Cor. i. 10. That ye be perfectly *joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*. Phil. ii. 2. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be *like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*.

† Eph. iv. 4—6. There is *one body and one Spirit*, even as ye are called in *one hope* of your calling : *one Lord, one faith, one baptism, &c.*

tianity, is **BROTHERLY LOVE** for the truth's sake, exercising and discovering itself in the various ways which the Scripture directs ; which, viewed in its full extent, is the fulfilling of the law. For no breach of the divine law, and no disaffection to the gospel, can appear upon any in the fellowship, but this brotherly love teaches to check it, reprove it, censure it, and, if necessary, to cast the disobedient out of the church, for the destruction of the flesh, &c. while the same love teaches to cherish and encourage what appears agreeable to the Gospel, and excites to succour the tempted, relieve the distressed, support the weak, supply the poor and necessitous ; and, in a word, "to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. vi. 2.

No **FORBEARANCE** dare we allow, besides a forbearance with persons' different natural tempers and capacities, and the like ; or forbearing with them for a time, while the scriptural methods are taking to convince them of, and recover them from the error of their ways. We can, and ought thus far to forbear one another in love, Eph. iv. 2. More than this would be the hating our brother in our hearts, by suffering sin upon him. The mutual forbearance required in Rom. xiv. we apprehend has respect to the Jewish distinctions about meats and days manifestly spoken of there ; which was allowed and required while the old covenant was vanishing away : but we cannot suppose the apostle intended in that discourse to render any one Christian precept or appointment indifferent.

Upon the above principles, we are obliged to separate from the communion and worship of all such religious societies, as appear to us to be not professing the simple truth for their only ground of hope, or not walking in obedience to it ; which we are directed and encouraged to do, in 2 Cor. vi. 14, 18. vii. 1. And we judge we have a natural right, from the principle of liberty of conscience, to make and maintain such separation ; while we allow to others the same liberty, without grudging or limitation.

But though we cannot extend our Christian charity beyond these limits ; yet we are ready to do good to all men, as we have opportunity and ability.

We think it our duty, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men ; to be obedient to magistrates ; and to avoid and discountenance every thing that may disturb the peace of the state or neighbourhood.

We are utterly against aiming to promote the cause we contend for, either by creeping into private houses, or by causing our voice to be heard in the streets or in the fields, or by officiously obtruding our opinions upon others in conversation. We only hold forth our doctrine by public reading and preaching the Word ; standing fast together in the faith of the gospel, and practising what our Lord hath commanded us ; and are ready to give an answer to every one that asketh the reason of our hope and practice ; and to do it with meekness towards men, and without reserve, in the fear of God. 1 Pet. iii. 15.

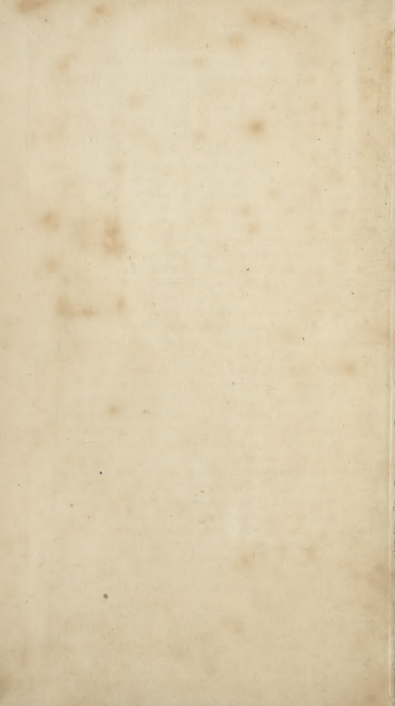
If then we are reproached and hated, because we confine our Christian charity within such seemingly narrow limits, or for our following the practices of the primitive Christians ; we are willing to suffer it for conscience' sake, without resisting evil, but aiming to overcome evil with good ; knowing it to be our duty, " to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us : " remembering the momentous import of those words, 2 Tim. ii. 12. " If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him : if we deny him, he also will deny us. " This reconciles us to shame and contempt, in hope that our reproach will be rolled away, when " Christ shall come to take vengeance upon them that know not God, and obey not his gospel ; and shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. "

Thus, Sir, I have given you as clear and distinct a view of our discipline, order, &c. as I can in words : but nothing can afford so familiar an idea of these things as the being spectators of them, and interested in them. Were you a frequent spectator, I will not venture to say what effect it would have upon your mind : perhaps what you might observe would appear strange, and on that account disgusting ; being so very different from the usual method of worship and fellowship. But, I must be of opinion, that it would be very striking to the mind of one who has

nothing but the divine Word for his rule ; because the things he will observe will be found so exactly scriptural. Whether or no you will choose to take lot with us, and enjoy the comfort of love, by an union with such as are for doing whatever Christ has commanded, I leave to your own judgment ; having no better wish for my dearest friend than that he should not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord ; but be partaker of the afflictions, and therewith of the consolations of the gospel, according to the power of God. I remain, J

Yours, &c.

FINIS.



9-9-87

