

Yes. By it he will be confirmed in his carelessness, self-deception, and sin. Ez. xiii. 10, 22. 'They have seduced my people, saying, Peace and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untimpered mortar.' 'With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.' And as the last means appointed by Christ to lead him to repentance is neglected, he is in great danger of finally perishing. 1 Cor. v. 5. 'To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.'

XVIII. Is injury done to the Church by this neglect?

Yes. 1st. By this countenancing of sin, the Church of Christ is made to appear as unholy as the kingdom of Satan. Jer. vii. 11. 'Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?' 1 Cor. xi. 21, 22. 'One is hungry, and another is drunken. What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the Church of God?' 2d. Sacred ordinances are prostituted. Ezek. xxii. 26. 'Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean.' 3d. The head of the Church is dishonoured. 2 Sam. xii. 14. 'By this deed, thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.' Rom. ii. 24. 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you.' 4th. The Holy Spirit is grieved, and provoked to withdraw. Eph. iv. 30. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit.' Gen. vi. 3. 'My spirit shall not always strive with man.' Rev. ii. 5. 'I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.' 5th. The wrath of God is brought on the Church. Joshua xxii. 20. 'Did not Achan commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.' 1 Chron. xv. 13. 'The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.' 1 Cor. xi. 30. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.'

XIX. May not a Church so far apostatize by the neglect of discipline, as to cease to be a Church of Christ, and become a synagogue of Satan?

Yes. This has sometimes happened. Rev. ii. 9. 'I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.' Rev. iii. 9. 'Them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews.' 16th verse.—'Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.'

XX. What benefits may arise to the offender from the exercise of discipline?

By this he sees sin to be evil and shameful. 2 Thess. iii. 14. 'If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.' And if he receive the censure in a proper spirit, it has a powerful tendency to humble, reclaim, and edify him. 2 Cor. x. 5. 'Our authority which the Lord hath given us for edification.'

XXI. What benefits arise to the Church from the faithful exercise of discipline?

1. Hereby sinners are discouraged from hypocritically joining the Church, and the leaven which might infect the whole lump is purged out. 1 Cor. v. 7. 'Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.'

2. The number of her true converts increased. Acts xvi. 4, 5. 'As they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordin-

ed of the Apostles and Elders, which were at Jerusalem; and so were the Churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily' Acts v. 11, 13, 14. 'And great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things.' 'And of the rest, durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.' 3d. Her holiness manifested. John ii. 16. 'Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandize.' 4th. The honour of her Head vindicated. Ez. xxxvi. 23. 'The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you, before their eyes.' 5th. And God's gracious presence and blessing secured. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' Rev. iii. 10. 'Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.'

XXII. But may not the offender, by the exercise of discipline, be led to forsake the preaching of the Gospel, and thus become more hardened?

As discipline is an ordinance of God, we must expect the neglect, rather than the exercise of it to harden the sinner; but if, in his pride and obstinacy, he disregard the advantages which flow from it, when received in a right spirit, the rulers of the Church are not to be deterred from their duty, any more than than the Minister of the Gospel from preaching, because many are hardened by it, and have their guilt and dangers increased. 2 Cor. ii. 16. 'To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life. Jude v. 19. 'These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit.'

XXIII. Are the rulers of the Church deeply responsible for the right exercise of discipline?

They who hold office by appointment, from Christ, whose faithfulness will be followed by so many and great blessings,—whose negligence must be the source of such deep and lasting injuries to the Church, dishonour to Christ, and evil to sinners,—should feel themselves under a most solemn responsibility, in this matter, and must expect to be called to a most strict account at the day of judgment, for the part which they act, in relation to it. 1 Pet. v. 4. 'And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.' Heb. xiii. 17. 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.'

(To be concluded in our next.)

THE GOSPEL MESSENGER.

How high the honour is to bear the seal
Of an ambassador of God to men,
Delivering his high behests to them,
And guiding them to their eternal weal!
O! what a holy flame of living zeal
Should burn upon the altar of his soul,
To snatch the ruined from the fell controul
Of the destroyer, who doth basely steal
The creature from the Creator, and betray
The immortal from the statutes of his God,
Into the broad and ever downward way
Conducting to the dark and drear abode,
Where ontcast souls consume in hellish pains
A long and howling night in red eternal chains.